The settings of the sacrifice : eschatology and cosmology in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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The Settings of the Sacrifice:
Eschatology and Cosmology in the Epistle to the Hebrews

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Declaration

The material contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any university.

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To My Parents

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

I. *The Background of Hebrews' Thought*

A. The state of the question

The principal difficulty in interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews is the necessity to understand its argument without any clear knowledge of the context in which it was written. Such 'riddles'[1] have given rise to an immense body of literature which has attempted in one way or another to fill in the gaps which Hebrews has left us. Indeed, in addition to the identity of the writer and the point of origin, the recipients and destination are also unidentified, together constituting the four great unknowns of the epistle.[2]

Besides questions of provenance and destination, however, there is also the matter of the proper background against which to understand Hebrews. What first century milieu best explains the particular blend of themes and imagery which one encounters in the epistle? This investigation has passed through various phases in which one or another background has come into prominence, resulting in a number of possible options. Lincoln Hurst's recent monograph on this issue, for example, surveys at least eight different contexts against which the epistle has been read in an attempt to understand it more fully.[3] This uncertainty more than any other has given rise to a myriad of widely contrasting interpretations of Hebrews and the situation of its origin.

1. Non-Christian backgrounds

Perhaps the most popular understanding of Hebrews in the first part of this century was that which saw the author against the background of Plato/Philo. By the 1950's, this line of interpretation was virtually the consensus, reaching

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[1]Reference to these kinds of ambiguities as 'riddles' goes back at least as far as J. Biesenthal, *Der Trostschreiben des Apostels Paulus an die Hebräer* (Leipzig: Fernau, 1878) 1. The term has continued to be used up until the present (see W. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu* exordium, narratio, *und* postscriptum *(Hebr 1-2 und 13,22-25)*, CBNTS 21 (Lund: Almquist & Wiksell, 1989) 11 n. 1.

[2]So Übelacker 12, following O. Kuss. 'Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Seelsorger' *TrThZ* 67 (1958) 1.

[3]*The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990). In addition, 'apocalyptic' is included under Hurst's discussion of Philo, Alexandria, and Platonism.

its climax in Ceslas Spicq's two volume commentary.[4] It received a sharp critique, however, in Ronald Williamson's extensive comparison, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*.[5] While Williamson conceded that the author 'almost certainly lived and moved in circles where ... ideas such as those we meet in Philo's works were known and discussed' and that 'he drew upon the same fund of cultured Greek vocabulary upon which Philo drew',[6] Williamson did not, in the end, believe that the author had ever read Philo's works or come under their influence.[7] Hurst has also offered further objections in his recent work.[8]

Despite Williamson's lengthy criticisms, however, Philonic readings have continued to surface in works such as those by L. K. K. Dey[9] and James Thompson.[10] Although scholarship has on the whole been more cautious, this line of interpretation continues to exert an influence in treatments as recent as the commentaries of Harold Attridge[11] and Erich Grässer.[12] While few any more would interpret the epistle in a thoroughgoing Platonic or Philonic way, it is still often assumed that such an element is present and crucial to understanding the argument of the epistle.[13]

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[4]*L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols. EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1952-53). Hurst, *Background* 7, notes that the idea seems to go back at least as far as Grotius in 1646, *Annotationes in Acta Apostolorum et in epistolas catholicas* (Paris, 1646), and was given its first thorough presentation in the work of Ménégoz in 1894, *La Théologie de l'Epître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1894) 197-219.

[5]ALGHJ 4 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1970).

[6]*Philo and Hebrews* 493.

[7]*Philo and Hebrews* 579.

[8]*Background* 7-42.

[9]*The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLDS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975).

[10]*The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical, 1981).

[11]*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) e.g. 219, 223, 261-63.

[12]*An die Hebräer (1-6)*, EKK 17/1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1990) 34f, as also his second volume, *An die Hebräer (7,1-10,18)*, EKK 17/2 (Zürich: Benziger, 1993) e. g. 87f.

[13]So S. Lehne: 'The works by Dey, Thompson, Nomoto and Luck, among many others, show clearly that the Alexandrian vein of Heb. must be taken seriously', *The New Covenant in Hebrews*, JSNTSS 44 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 96 (I am not certain that Nomoto and Luck should actually be placed in this category). M. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTSS 73 (JSOT, 1992) 55-56, also believes the author's language to presuppose Platonic metaphysics, although she does not believe this aspect the most crucial to understanding the epistle.

Another viewpoint which has claimed several major supporters this century is that view which reads the epistle in the light of pre-Christian Gnosticism.[14] The main proponent of this option has of course been Ernst Käsemann, whose 1939 *Das wandernde Gottesvolk* set the course for a significant segment of Hebrews scholarship in the twenty or thirty years which followed. Käsemann's position has also been rebuffed, however, by Otfried Hofius' 1969 doctoral dissertation, *Katapausis*, in which he concluded that '[a]ls Ziel einer Himmels- oder Erlösungswanderschaft erscheint die κατάπαυσις, wie wir erkennen konnten, in diesem Text [3:7-4:13] nicht.'[15] Hurst has advanced this critique as well, concluding that, 'the time may be ripe to bring to a close yet another chapter in the history of the interpretation of Hebrews.'[16] Despite Hurst's conclusiveness, however, there are still some interpreters who see Hebrews at least on a trajectory toward what would later become Gnosticism.[17]

Another background which attracted a following in the years after the Dead Sea discoveries was that of Qumran. It was only to be expected that the new documents would eventually be tried in relation to every imaginable connection they might have to the New Testament, and Hebrews was no exception. In 1958, Yigael Yadin published an article exploring possible relationships between the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hebrews, claiming that the recipients of Hebrews were converted members of the Qumran sect.[18] He noted aspects of the desert community which might explain certain features of the epistle, such as a concern with angels, priestly messiahship, and a focus on the wilderness generation. For the next ten years or so, Hebrews scholarship saw a significant number of 'converts' to a group which believed the Qumran literature key to understanding the situation which the author was addressing, including even Spicq himself.[19] While F. F. Bruce,[20] Herbert Braun,[21] and others[22] have pointed

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[14]Including the likes of E. Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. by R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 [1939]); G. Bornkamm, 'Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief' *TBl* 21 (1942) 56-66; G. Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, SNT 2 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1969), and Grässer, *Der Glaube im Hebräerbrief*, MTS 2 (Marburg: Elwert, 1965). Cf. his 1990 commentary, *Hebr. 1-6* 34.

[15]*Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, WUNT 11 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1970) 151. Hofius' Habilitationsschrift furthered his critique of Gnosticism in terms of the nature of the veil in Hebrews: *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes*, WUNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1972).

[16]*Background* 74.

[17]So Grässer *Hebr 1-6* 34 and possibly Thompson, *Beginnings* 15-16.

[18]'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *ScrHier* 4 (1958) 36-53. For a discussion and critique, see Hurst, *Background* 43ff.

[19]'L'Épître aux Hébreux, Apollos, Jean-Baptiste, les Hellénistes et Qumran', *RQ* 1 (1959) 365-90. G. W. Buchanan went so far as to write that the similarity between Hebrews and Qumran was 'so

out that the similarities can be explained equally well by other means, there remain a number of scholars who would still see Qumran as key to understanding the epistle.[23]

An interesting omission from Hurst's chapter headings is that of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It is not of course that he does not mention the possibility that the heavenly tabernacle, for example, is the heavenly temple of Jewish apocalyptic. This is in fact the interpretation which Hurst himself favours. What is interesting is that Hurst only discusses this option as the more likely alternative to the Platonic reading of the tabernacle and does not, therefore, subject it to critique.

There is indeed a significant group of Hebrews scholars who have read the epistle through the eyes of apocalyptic literature, viewing texts such as the Testament of Levi and 1 Enoch as appropriate backgrounds against which Hebrews can be understood. Otto Michel, for example, was early of the opinion that 'steht der Hebr der Apokalyptik ... näher als der Vergeistigung bei Philo.'[24] C. K. Barrett's article, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews'[25] also countered the then prevailing Platonic trend of scholarship with the claim that '[t]he heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews is not the product of Platonic idealism, but the eschatological temple of apocalyptic Judaism, the temple which is in heaven primarily in order that it may be manifested on earth.'[26] Hurst would

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obvious that many scholars noticed it almost simultaneously', in 'The Present State of Scholarship in Hebrews', *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults*, vol. 1, Festschrift for M. Smith, ed, by J. Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) 308 (cited in Hurst, *Background* 146 n. 14).

[20]'"To the Hebrews" or "To the Essenes"', *NTS* 9 (1963) 217-32.

[21]'Qumran und das Neue Testament: Ein Bericht über 10 Jahre Forschung (1950-59): Hebräer', *ThR* 30 (1964) 1-38.

[22]E. g. J. Coppens, 'Les Affinités qumraniennes de l'épître aux Hébreux', *NRT* 84 (1962) 128-41, 257-282 (who actually saw Qumran influence on a supposed *paraenetic* source behind Hebrews), and, of course, Hurst himself, *Background* 43-66.

[23]J. Murphey-O'Connor, for example, in an article entitled 'Qumran and the New Testament' writes as recently as 1989 that the question 'needs further investigation, and in this research the possibility of Essene influence in Asia Minor must receive adequate attention', *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. by E. J. Epp and G. W. McRae (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) 62-63. In this same volume, P. E. Hughes' treatment of modern scholarship on Hebrews, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews' 351-53, is unbalanced in its orientation toward those who see Qumran as the most probable background against which to understand the epistle.

[24]*Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 13th ed., MeyerK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984 [1936]) 62.

[25]In *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954) 363-93.

[26]'Eschatology' 389. Barrett also notes that as early as 1932, H. Wenschkewitz, *Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe Tempel, Priester und Opfer im N.T.*, *Angelos* 4 (1932) 149,

also see works such as *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the above as the appropriate contexts in which to seek parallels to the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews.[27]

Following in this general train of scholarship is a subgroup who see Merkabah mysticism as illustrative for understanding the epistle. While Hans-Martin Schenke is usually given the credit for this suggestion,[28] a case was presented more fully by Williamson[29] and was in fact the conclusion of Hofius' attacks on Gnostic interpretations of the epistle.[30] While Hurst[31] and others[32] have provided arguments against this idea on the basis of dating, Christian Rose has more recently pointed out the similarities of 4Q405 to later Merkabah speculation in defense of this background.[33]

There is thus a significant amount of scholarship which sees an apocalyptic milieu as the best explanation for the epistle's thought. Merkabah speculation in particular might bring together to a limited extent those who favour Qumran with those who have argued for the influence of the broader stream of apocalyptic thinking. While other suggestions have been made which posit some other non-Christian milieu as key in understanding Hebrews,[34] the above constitute the major non-Christian backgrounds which have been suggested to date.

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suggested that the author was dependent on 'spätjüdischen apokalyptischen und rabbinischen Gedanken' in his treatment of the heavenly sanctuary.

[27]*Background* 30-32, 38f.

[28]'Erwägungen zum Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes', *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz: Festschrift für Herbert Braun*, ed. by H. D. Betz and L. Schottroff (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973).

[29]'The Background of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *ET* 87 (1976) 232-37.

[30]*Vorhang* 95.

[31]*Background* 82-85.

[32]E. g. G. Theissen's book review of *Vorhang*, *ThLZ* 99 (1974) 426-28; and that of G. Stemberger, *Kairos* 17 (1975) 303-6.

[33]*Die Wolke der Zeugen: Eine exegetisch-traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 10,32-12,3*, WUNT 60 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1994). The dissimilarities between these two, however, must still be taken into account. See H. Löhr, 'Thronversammlung und preisender Tempel: Beobachtungen am himmlischen Heiligtum im Hebräerbrief und in den Sabbatopferliedern aus Qumran', *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Welt im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991) 185-205 (esp. 204-5).

[34]The other background which Hurst notes is E. A. Knox's suggestion that Hebrews was written to Samaritan Christians, in 'The Samaritans and the Epistle to the Hebrews', *Churchman* 22 (1927) 184-93. C. H. H. Scobie, 'The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity' *NTS* 19 (1973) 390-414, took up this idea in 1973 in his attempt see Acts 7, John, and Hebrews as reflecting Samaritan concerns. Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (London, SCM, 1976) 50, similarly saw these (and Qumran) as belonging to the same circle. For a discussion, see Hurst, *Background* 75-82.

2. Christian parallels

A number of parallels between Hebrews and other parts of the New Testament have been pointed out in this discussion. Hurst lists three in particular, namely, the Stephen tradition, Pauline theology, and 1 Peter.[35] The precise contours of each of these suggestions are probably less important for us at this point than noting the way in which they relate to the inquiry in general, both individually and as a whole.

To begin with, the most important consequence which these three could have for the background issue is that they might indicate that the primary background influence on Hebrews is that of early Christianity itself. Although this idea is often assumed rather than stated, it is important to point out. Does Hebrews stand within the limits of 'mainstream' Christianity in the first century, if one can speak of such? Does it represent a form which lies within a 'central' tradition in the early church, or would its argument have been viewed as tangential or divergent? Those who believe it to be mainstream might very well stand against treatments such as that of Thompson, which see in Hebrews the 'beginning of Christian philosophy' or something else significantly different from the earliest traditions of Christianity.[36] Similarities or interaction with Pauline or other early Christian traditions, therefore, might function to confirm a continuity of Hebrews with the earliest traditions.

If an interaction or relationship to Pauline theology would demonstrate that Hebrews stands in close relation to Christianity's 'central traditions', similarities to the Stephen tradition of Acts 7 might help locate the author more specifically within those traditions. In this regard, the categories of Raymond Brown might serve as a starting point.[37] He identifies four groups in the earliest church in terms of their orientation toward Judaistic practices: 1) those who believed that Gentiles should be circumcised and fully observe the Mosaic Law (Judaisers), 2) those who did not insist on circumcision but required the keeping of some Jewish observances (e. g. James), 3) those who did not insist on circumcision or the keeping of Jewish food laws *for Gentiles* (e. g. Paul), and 4) those who saw no real significance to the Jewish cult or feasts at all. If the author and readers

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[35]*Background* 89-130.

[36]Thompson, *Beginnings* 160-61, has noted, for example, that Braun, *Gesammelte Studien zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1967) 229; and Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews* 580; tend to assume that 'a dependence on metaphysics and philosophical categories would mean that Hebrews is outside the center of canonical literature.' While canonical status is a different issue, the discussion demonstrates our point.

[37]Brown, R. and Meier, J., *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) 1-9.

could be identified in relation to these four or similar groupings, a great deal of light would potentially be shed on the argument of the epistle.

The Stephen tradition as represented in Acts 7 falls within Brown's 'Group 4' and can be described as 'Hellenist' in character. If the depiction of Stephen and thus of the Hellenists of Acts 6 proved to be helpful in explicating the argument of Hebrews, then one might assert that the author was broadly similar to this fourth group and might have had attitudes like that depicted in Acts 7. As we shall see, such an identification could be significant for understanding the author's discussion of the tabernacle. Equally, identification of the category to which the audience[38] of Hebrews belonged would also be helpful in the discussion and could provide rationales for the direction which the argument takes.

Finally, similarities to 1 Peter seem less helpful in understanding the author's argument.[39] The principal way in which they might assist in 'placing' Hebrews is in helping to date the epistle or locate its place of origin or destination. Since 1 Peter can be considered in some ways as 'deutero-Pauline', it is perhaps better to consider its impact on the discussion as being much the same as that of Pauline theology in general, although it might indicate an interaction with a post-Pauline form of it.[40]

Christian backgrounds which have been suggested as relevant to Hebrews, therefore, function together as one main option to the non-Christian milieux mentioned above. They pose the question whether it is necessary to go looking outside Christianity itself for an explanation of the author's argument in the first place. Similarities to Pauline theology (or 1 Peter), for example, might demonstrate that the author stands in close relationship to one of the main 'traditions' of early Christianity, while similarities to the Stephen tradition could further identify the author as a Hellenist with corresponding concerns.

B. Problems with the inquiry

1. Lack of focus on the text

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[38]I will assume, following what seems to be the consensus (so Grässer, 'Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963, *TRu* 30 [1964] 153: 'ist heute *communis opinio*'), that Hebrews is primarily a homily sent to a community in which it was meant to be read aloud. For a discussion of the issues involved, see W. Lane's Commentary, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word (Dallas: Word Books, 1991) lxix-lxxv.

[39]For a full critique, see Hurst, *Background* 125-130.

[40]I will not go into the question of whether 1 Peter is pseudonymous or not, although I find the reference to Rome as 'Babylon' in 5:13 as a probable indication of a post 70 C.E. date. See the standard introductions.

One of the greatest problems with regard to the whole discussion which has been briefly summarised above is that, given the way in which the search is often conducted, those who look inevitably 'find what they are looking for'.[41] That is to say, it is not difficult to find parallel passages in the literature of Judaism or in the New Testament which, with a bit of effort, can be made to bear at least a superficial resemblance to Hebrews. At its worst, this practice places Hebrews into whatever procrustian bed the scholar has in mind, altering the epistle's form in favour of the background of choice.

It seems as if scholarship has at times forgotten that the first necessity in all such investigation is to elucidate the text at hand. The identification of the author or recipients' background does in itself add to our knowledge of first century Christianity. Similarly, filling in gaps of knowledge with contemporary parallels makes the search more interesting, but the first order of business in either case is to understand the text itself as it stands. Hebrews cannot be used to illuminate the early church until it has first been understood on its own. Likewise, if the text does not require an elaborate hypothesis involving other milieux of which we have knowledge, then it is suspect to posit such relationships in the face of a simpler interpretation.

Given the plethora of suggestions with regard to background, it is clear that scholars have not exercised discipline in their pursuit. They have given in to the irresistable desire to fill in textual gaps which may not in the end be fillable. There is a need for a study which methodically attempts to stick to the text without recourse to the background literature until it is absolutely necessary. As we shall claim, an exclusively text-centred study is an impossibility; nevertheless, there is a need for refinement and precise method if the present diversity of opinion is to be narrowed in scope.

2. Myopic emphasis on particular passages

William G. Johnsson wrote in the late seventies that there was a tendency among Protestant scholars to neglect the subject of the cultus in Hebrews, while Roman Catholic scholars tended not to integrate their studies of the cultus with the paraenetic material.[42] He also noted that those who emphasised the cultus tended to downplay the epistle's futurist eschatology, as opposed to those who

[41] *Space* 51.

[42] 'The Cultus of Hebrews in Twentieth-Century Scholarship', *ExpTim* 89 (1977-78) 104-5.

focused on paraenesis. Johnsson's conclusion is still apt: 'the solution to these problems will lie in a holistic view of the book of Hebrews.'[43]

Certain passages in the epistle are clearly more susceptible to comparison to certain suggested backgrounds. 3:7-4:13, for example, proves to be the starting point for Käsemann's Gnostic interpretation. As shall be seen in chapter 5, various verses in the central theological section are more prone to one or another of the interpretations of the heavenly tabernacle along with their respective backgrounds. Clearly, a proper understanding of the author's intent must be able to account for the *whole* epistle without ignoring any pericope and without overemphasis on any one in particular.

Any attempt to answer the background question must be able to create a consistent picture of the author's thought as a whole,[44] integrating all passages into a coherent pattern of thought.[45] As we shall claim below, however, this approach does not presume that the author is drawing from only one milieu, only that the work which he has created is, on the whole, a unity, regardless of what 'sources' which he may have drawn upon.[46] In the attempt to delineate such a unity, there is a wealth of scholarship on each pericope of the text. The attempt to understand the epistle as a whole should draw upon the best wisdom of the literature at every point, conscientiously avoiding as much as possible the tendency to ignore the wise 'advice' of scholarship on one part of the epistle because of a desire to maintain an overall thesis.

3. Assumption of a single background

A virtual consensus has emerged that the epistle should not be presumed to lie exclusively in one single tradition. Even an interpreter as prone to a Platonic reading of the epistle as Thompson has written, 'An analysis of the intellectual presuppositions of the author necessitates that one distinguish between tradition and redaction more carefully than has been done in previous scholarship. It is likely that the author of Hebrews employed various traditions which he reshaped for the needs of his audience.'[47] In particular, it is now

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[43]'Cultus' 106. Isaacs also notes of Hebrews, 'its paraenesis and its theology cannot be considered apart from each other' (*Space* 22).

[44]It must always be borne in mind as a possibility, however, that the author might not be consistent at every point.

[45]Dey, while meaning something slightly different from us here, agrees that it is important to 'describe the total framework of its [Hebrews'] religious thought' (*Intermediary World* 3).

[46]It is at this point that we differ from Dey.

[47]*Beginnings* 12.

often suggested that the epistle has at least two dimensions which must be taken into account, the one temporal and the second spatial or metaphysical.

Barrett, for example, was one of the first to propose that Platonic imagery in Hebrews must be understood in combination with a more fundamental eschatology.[48] James D. G. Dunn has also written that Hebrews is 'a fascinating combination of the Platonic world view and Jewish eschatology.'[49] Even Dey has agreed that there is 'in Hebrews both the eschatological language of primitive Christianity as well as the language of Hellenistic Judaism.'[50] One can count a number of other scholars up to the present who have seen a combination of Platonism in particular with some sort of eschatological or apocalyptic dimension.[51]

It is obvious that whatever the traditions upon which the author is drawing, he is utilising them in a way which will be relevant to his argument.[52] This fact implies that, as Hans-Friedrich Weiss has written, 'muß vor allem aus der eigenen theologischen Zielsetzung und dem pastoralen Grundanliegen des Autors des Hebr zum Verstehen gebracht werden', rather than seeking the meaning of the epistle in relation to this or that religio-historical setting.[53] There are a number of scholars, for example, who, while accepting that Hebrews uses Platonic *language*, do not believe that this language contributes in any way to the author's thought.[54] Even if the author is not drawing

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[48]'Eschatology' esp. 385ff: 'The heavenly tabernacle and its ministrations are from one point of view eternal archetypes, from another, they are eschatological events' (385).

[49]*The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991) 88.

[50]*Intermediary World* 1.

[51]In addition to those just mentioned (cf. also n. 13), G. Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. and J. Vos (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 56ff.; H. Braun, 'Die Gewinnung der Gewißheit in dem Hebräerbrief', *ThLZ* 96 (1971) 330: 'Metaphysik'; G. MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews', *Semeia* 12 (1978) 179: apocalyptic and Platonic imagery both present; Attridge, *Hebrews* 223-24: earthly-heavenly intersects with new-old; Lehne, *New Covenant* 96 and n. 17: 'blended in a creative way'; H-F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, MeyerK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 114: it is in a 'Mittelstellung' between apocalyptic and hellenism; Isaacs, *Space* 50-56: more nuanced than 'a simple "yes" or "no" answer' (56), etc ... .

[52]In the light of the masculine singular participle which occurs in 11:32 and the fact that the author seems known to the recipients (e.g. 13:23), it seems highly unlikely that the author is female. I will therefore refer to the author throughout the study with the masculine pronoun.

[53]*Hebräer* 114.

[54]E.g. Michel, *Hebräer* 289: one cannot 'von einer Einordnung des Hebr in die philonische Konzeption sprechen'; S. Nomoto, 'Herkunft und Struktur der Hohenpriestervorstellung im Hebräerbrief', *NovT* 10 (1968) 18-19: while the terms are Alexandrian in origin, their content is no longer in a special relationship to its metaphysic or exegesis; Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews* 557; D.

particularly on a non-Christian background and is within the general flow of early Christianity, Hebrews must still be interpreted just like any other book in the New Testament — as a book which must be allowed to make its own unique contribution in the light of its particular situation and the author's own theology.[55] The identification of a general background and a common language or symbolic world does not necessarily imply what an individual author will make of that imagery in a specific context.

4. Assumption that author and reader use the same language

While many scholars would probably acknowledge the fact that the author and his audience may have had a fundamentally different theology or quite different concerns, it is important to state this possibility plainly. Although someone like Barnabas Lindars can feel certain that the author and recipients were originally from the same community,[56] several studies have capitalised on the explanatory power which a difference in outlook might offer.[57]

George MacRae in particular has used such a possibility innovatively in an attempt to sort out the tortured issue of the nature of the heavenly tabernacle in the epistle, suggesting that '[t]he distinction between homilist and audience also accounts for the apparently conflicting temple imagery in Hebrews. In his effort to strengthen the hope of his hearers, the homilist mingles his own Alexandrian imagery with their apocalyptic presuppositions.'[58] While one may not in the end agree with MacRae, he insightfully recognises the necessity of bearing in mind the distinction between 'homilist and audience' when attempting to understand the author's argument. It is indeed possible that the desire to persuade rhetorically has played a role in the imagery and language the author has used.

Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982) 131; J. Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992) 46: 'Philonic influence is relatively superficial.'

[55]As Nomoto writes with regard to the high priestly motif in the epistle, despite the possibility that there may be some religio-historical background which might explain the ultimate origin of the motif, the author would have utilised such a background by way of a process involving early Christian tradition and his particular way of argument ('Herkunft' 10).

[56]*The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991) 7.

[57]Including some of the more far fetched suggestions, such as H. Kosmala's proposal that the readers of Hebrews were Qumranites in the process of being catechised in a Christian mission to the Essenes, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).

[58]'Heavenly Temple' 179.

C. Beyond the present state of research

Even with the recent publication of Hurst's monograph on the background question, scholarship does not seem to have come to a precise consensus. Hurst's basic dismissal of all the non-Christian backgrounds which he treats[59] probably does indicate an unspoken consensus among all that Hebrews is, more than anything else, a document of early Christianity in the late first century. Almost all of present scholarship would invariably agree that regardless of what other traditions the author might use, he is first and foremost a Christian.

Much of the literature nevertheless seems to be moved along mindlessly by various eddies without conscious regard of the currents carrying them. The background question is no longer in the fore in many recent investigations of Hebrews, yet assumptions about the epistle's background of thought continue to be made without appropriate consideration or self-consciousness.[60] In many cases the literature seems to have taken on the various criticisms which we have mentioned above, but, in our opinion, without a clear discussion of method.[61]

It is our contention that scholarship about the background question has come to a certain 'plateau' in which progress on the question has levelled off. Most scholars agree that Hebrews may be a unique synthesis, but no one has attempted to delineate what this mixture of ideas might be in a systematic way. In a sense, Hurst's treatment is the culmination of the searches of the previous generations and their faulty attempts to locate the background of Hebrews in a single tradition. While Hurst himself may move beyond this presumption, he is not able to act on this possibility, since his book is basically a catalogue and critique of the various opinions which have been suggested. *His study cannot actually answer the question because it too approaches the subject topically from the outside.* In a sense, it marks the close of an epoch in which scholarship attempted to answer the background issue on the basis of parallels.

The present study, therefore, commences with several important considerations which flow from the preceding analysis. First of all, it should be

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[59]Once again, with the notable and yet again unspoken exception of Jewish apocalyptic. In my opinion, scholars who see this background as illustrative for Hebrews too often seem to forget that this is also a *non-Christian* background. Although Christianity may have utilised more elements from this milieu than, say Platonism, it must always be remembered that Christian 'apocalyptic' thinking is something different from its Jewish relatives.

[60]I am reminded of Lehne's *passé* remarks noted above in n. 13, which do not seem conscious of the number of scholars who do not see any substantial middle Platonic influence on Hebrews or of the substantial arguments which have been made against this background.

[61]The studies of the last ten years or so seem by and large, for example, to have taken the wisdom of the previous generations in being more cautious when positing background connections. I have also mentioned the growing consensus that the epistle may be a mixture of traditions.

noted that the relationship between background and text is a complicated one. On the one hand, the primary (though not sole) impetus behind the search for Hebrews' background(s) is usually the desire to be able to interpret the epistle correctly. On the other hand, the only basis for obtaining such information is in fact the text itself. The fact that Hebrews may be a creative mixture of backgrounds further complicates matters, for rather than having one milieu which explains the thought of the epistle throughout, there may be several milieux, each of which explains an aspect of the text. The background question on the macro-level of the epistle could thus be a matter of delineating a certain combination rather than one of identifying one key background in particular.

The search for the background(s) of Hebrews, therefore, must inevitably begin with and focus upon the text. In each individual context, background information must be 'tried on' in determining the appropriate meaning of each pericope. On the level of the epistle as a whole, however, it will not be possible to determine the precise synthesis until the entire epistle has been analysed. In our new quest for the meaning of the text and its background of thought, therefore, we are urging exactly the opposite emphasis to that of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, typified well by Dey's approach to Hebrews when he wrote, 'It is only when we are able to place Hebrews in its particular religious context that the significance of any concept or idea, the motivation behind it, the purpose of the writing and its literary character can be defined.'[62] While this statement contains a kernel of truth, it makes a number of assumptions which simply cannot be made with regard to Hebrews and its potentially complex background. We simply cannot assume any longer that one particular religious context will unlock all of the epistle's secrets.

Any systematic attempt to 'place' Hebrews, therefore, must methodically avoid the pitfalls of the discussion to this point. On the basis of our previous critique, it seems clear that such a study should have the following characteristics:

1) ***It must be a rigorously text-orientated approach*** which does not take recourse to background parallels until it has thoroughly considered the possible meanings of the text as derived from the text. Background material can then be utilised to delimit interpretative options.

2) ***It must examine the text as a whole*** without placing an undue emphasis on any one pericope or theme. In this endeavour, it should take into account the best exegetical work of scholarship on each particular context.

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[62]*Intermediary World* 3.

3) ***It must methodically attempt to allow the text to project its own thought world*** and one which may represent a creative synthesis of ideas. This criterion in and of itself requires the determination of what kind of 'framework' would be most appropriate for analysing the epistle on its own terms. Such a hermeneutic should itself be derived from the categories of the author's own system of thought. There are important hermeneutical and methodological considerations in such an attempt which will be discussed in the second part of this introduction.

4) ***It must bear in mind the possible difference in outlook between the author and the recipients of the epistle,*** remaining conscious of the fact that Hebrews represents a rhetorical situation which may result in language which does not always function on a literal level.

In a certain sense, following such a method will not directly address the background question on the level of the epistle as a whole, although it will inevitably engage in the background literature at those specific points where it is necessary for the interpretation of a particular passage in the text. We would claim, however, that such a study is the most appropriate first step toward delineating the epistle's *whole* background of thought. A full explication of the precise synthesis which appears in Hebrews simply cannot be made until the whole epistle has been analysed.

In a sense, what this study attempts to do is to create a 'data base' of sorts which will serve as a necessary prolegomena to the broader desire to approach the background question in general and indeed other riddles of Hebrews. By attempting to reconstruct the 'thought world' of the author as best can be perceived from the text, the overall issue of milieu should come into better focus. Many of the interpretative options which have been suggested in terms of background should begin to appear less likely as a mere result of the process, while other possibilities should come to the fore. In terms of the relationship of Hebrews to other New Testament traditions, our study would first hope to locate Hebrews as much as possible on its own terms, subsequently allowing for comparisons to be made to other New Testament documents.

II. *Method*

A. Text-orientated approaches

The past twenty-five years has seen a rapid multiplication of methods which move away from more traditional historical-critical interpretation to

hermeneutics which focus either on the text or on the reader.[63] These methods present both new opportunities for drawing meaning from biblical texts as well as sobering realities which any future hermeneutic must take into account. These realities delimit the possibilities for a text-orientated approach, necessitating at least a brief overview of the issues involved.

It is first necessary to clarify and explain what we might mean by a 'text-*orientated*' approach, in distinction from other 'text-*centred*' methods presently in use.[64] There are at least two interpretative methods in use at the moment which might be considered 'text-centred', namely, structuralism and narrative criticism. Both of these attempt in general to interpret the text without reference to authorial intent. Since our interest is avowedly focused on the intended meaning of the author, it is clear that we will not strictly be following such methods. By 'text-orientated' we imply a method whose primary focus is on the text rather than religio-historical background, but we do not mean an exclusive attempt to interpret the text without recourse to historical information. These text-centred approaches which we have mentioned, however, are convenient backdrops against which the appropriate hermeneutical issues can be raised. We will use them, therefore, in order to help to clarify our purpose.

The principal way in which these text-focused methods are positively instructive for this study is in their indication that an author does not have complete control over the meaning of a text, an extremely poignant fact when

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[63]Although N. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 32 n.2, commented in 1985, 'I know of no survey of current biblical literary criticism ...', there are now several good books of an introductory nature available. Petersen does mention his own *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) and his article 'Literary Criticism in Biblical Studies', *Orientation by Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism Presented in Honor of William A. Beardslee*, ed. by R. A. Spencer, PTMS 35 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980). More recent overviews include T. Longman's *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); E. McKnight's *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); M. Powell's *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), esp. chapter 2; and especially S. Moore's *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1989). Other more specialised works on individual approaches are numerous. For a discussion of more general hermeneutical issues involved in discussions of the text and the reader, see A. C. Thiselton's *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980) and *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (London: Harper Collins, 1992).

[64]Throughout the following discussion, I will presuppose the speech-act model of sender-message-receiver, as represented by the written equivalent of author-text-reader. This is a widely used paradigm which is useful for discussing problems of interpretation. For a brief overview of the model and basic issues relating to it, see Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, chapter 2. These three components can be discussed further in terms of two movements: the movement from author to text (event of utterer to meaning of utterance) and the movement of text to reader (meaning of utterance to event of listener/reader), utilising the language of P. Ricoeur (cf. D. Klemm, *The Hermeneutic Theory of Paul Ricoeur: A Constructive Analysis* [London: Associated University, 1983]).

the text itself is the only source from which the author's specific intent can be inferred.[65] Any hermeneutic which is aimed at authorial intent, therefore, must take this fact into account. Recent hermeneutical discussions, as for example in the structuralist school of interpretation, have claimed that texts have meaning(s) independent of their authors. Daniel Patte, in his book *What is Structural Exegesis?*, notes, 'The structural methods are in sharp contrast to the traditional historical methods ... . [T]heir methodological preunderstanding of the text assumes that significations are imposed upon man.'[66]

Patte is concerned with the structures which are forced upon a story and upon an author by the constraints of language. He writes, 'When language imposes itself upon man, significations are also imposed upon man.'[67] Whereas Patte does not deny the possibility of an author creating significations, he wants to emphasise the deterministic aspect of language as well, particularly of the structures within which language must function.[68] From a structuralist perspective, a text can be studied as a text among the body of all texts, that is, synchronically, instead of as a text with an author and historical context, or diachronically. Although Patte is interested in narrative and mythical structures, this deterministic aspect of language can be claimed of any linguistic form, such as an epistle.

Narrative criticism is yet another attempt to bracket the author's intent and focus on the text itself. This is done by creating the hypothetical constructs of an 'implied author' and 'implied reader', who are (at least in theory) created out of the text rather than from the traditional concern for the historical author and reader(s).[69] The relationship of these constructs to the real author and reader is

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[65]In Ricoeur's terms, the utterer's meaning can be distinguished from the utterance meaning (Klemm 79f). Ricoeur himself writes, 'What happens in writing is the full manifestation of something that is in a virtual state, something nascent and inchoate, in living speech, namely the detachment of meaning from the event.' Such a situation brings about '[t]he semantic autonomy of the text', *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Christian University, 1976) 25.

[66](Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 14. It should be noted, however, that Ricoeur's emphasis on semantics over semiotics establishes the primacy of significations imposed on the text by authors over the significations imposed upon the author by the world of texts (cf. *Theory* 6f).

[67]*Structural Exegesis* 15.

[68]The whole structuralist enterprise seems to have been undermined to some extent by post-structuralism and deconstruction, since these modes of thinking tend to deny that any absolute meaning abides in the text at all. Our study, on the other hand, procedes from a kind of 'critical realism' (see below, p. 33, esp. n.86) which accepts that a text can have a meaning while also acknowledging that 'in textual language, meaning is exteriorized and alienated from the event of discourse', resulting in a certain 'autonomy of the text' (Ricoeur as summarised by Klemm, *Theory* 81).

[69]For further discussion of the implied author and reader, see Powell, *Narrative Criticism* 96f; J. Kingsbury, 'Reflections on the Reader', *NTS* 34 (1988) 442-460; Moore, *Literary Criticism* 45f; and

an important issue which seems to turn on matters such as the unity of a text. J. Kingsbury and Mark Powell nevertheless suggest that the story world, implied reader, and author could serve as an index to the 'real' historical story, text, and author.[70] The fact that an author or story world 'derived' from a text could differ from the originally intended story world or author demonstrates, however, that a text can have meaning(s) independent of the author's intent.

Our interest, as we have said, is the meaning which the author intended Hebrews to have. Unfortunately, the modern reader of a biblical text does not have recourse to the author and cannot question him (or her) about intended meaning(s). When dealing with a text like Hebrews which offers little information about its author or historical circumstances, the intended meaning of an author becomes increasingly remote. The lack of explicit knowledge makes it extremely difficult to eliminate interpretative options raised by an examination of the text.

It must be acknowledged, therefore, that it is impossible to know completely and absolutely what the author of Hebrews intended his text to mean. In fact, all authors are ultimately unaware of all the possible implications of what they write, a fact which applies emphatically to Hebrews, since the author could not have known that his 'sent homily' would become a text read two thousand years later by people who had little idea of the circumstances of its origin. This situation calls for some general sense of how to distinguish 'significations' intended by the author from those inadvertently created in the process of writing. Without recourse to the historical author, however, these assessments at best can only be approximations of intended meaning.

If narrative criticism and structuralism are helpful in drawing our attention to the fact that the meaning of a text is in a certain sense independent of authorial intent, they are also instructive in the points at which they fail as hermeneutical approaches. It is our contention that a strictly text-centred study is not only undesirable for our particular purposes; it is impossible. This is the case because no text has one single meaning. Every text generates a number of interpretative options because of gaps and tensions in meaning, one of which must be selected. Every reader responds to these gaps and tensions in one way or another and thus 'realises' one particular interpretative option. A historically minded reader will attempt to fill in gaps or reconcile apparent differences with historical knowledge, while other readers (all in fact) will utilise more subjective factors in interpretation. Any reading of a given text, therefore, will

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especially R. A. Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 6, 15f, and chapter 7.

[70]Kingsbury 'Reader' 459-60 and Powell, *Narrative Criticism* 96f.

inevitably shade off either toward the pole of historical background (where the author resides) or toward the pole of the reader(s).

There are two principal aspects of texts which demonstrate that this is the case. Both of these have been used to critique narrative criticism. For our study, they represent areas where particular caution must be exercised if there is to be any hope of approaching the author's intended meaning. Disunities, on the one hand, create tensions in a text and result from the editing of traditions and sources. On the other hand, there are inevitable gaps in meaning left in the process of composition itself. Together, these two problems which unavoidably occur when creating a text help elucidate what a text-orientated hermeneutic must be in order to approach the inner sanctum of authorial intent.

1. 'Disunity' within texts

The question of textual unity applies especially to documents such as those of the New Testament, since these all lie within traditions and, in many instances, involve specific written or oral sources. While an individual author's thought is certainly susceptible to discontinuity, this possibility is heightened when one is incorporating the 'words' of another into one's own discourse. Apparent disunity can also result from the use of figurative language. As we shall argue throughout the study, caution with regard to metaphorical language is especially appropriate to a consideration of Hebrews. In an attempt to distinguish between the actual intent of the author and 'extraneous meaning' created inadvertantly, these two causes of apparent disunity must be borne in mind.

a. Tensions resulting from the incorporation of traditions

The gospels more than any other genre provide poignant examples of the kinds of discontinuities which result when a story from one source is redacted into another narrative. Stephen Moore has noted, for example, that when James Dawsey applies a 'painstaking and heavily statistical analysis' to the Lucan style, his reading 'amplifies every chord of residual disharmony in the Lukan composition, arising from the forced cohabitation of disparate source materials', leading to an astounding conclusion on Dawsey's part.[71] Dawsey concludes that while unity can be maintained on the level of the author, one can only do so by

[71]Moore, *Literary Criticism* 32, referring to *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke* (Macon: Mercer University, 1986).

positing that the narrator of Luke is an 'unreliable narrator', whose viewpoint is neither consistent with Jesus or the author.[72]

Disunities such as this impinge most upon the study of Hebrews in those instances where Hebrews has incorporated Old Testament citations or utilised traditional material. Two examples will demonstrate the necessary care which must be taken when constructing a thought world from the text. The first is the author's incorporation of Jeremiah 31 (38 LXX) into his argument in chapter 8. Within the Jeremiah material, the need for a new covenant lies in the fact that Israel did not remain in the first covenant. Our study of Hebrews, however, will attempt to demonstrate that God had always planned to reveal himself[73] in a new covenant, even before the failure of Israel. The incorporation of 'foreign' material into the text results in a tension which cannot be allowed to obscure the author's broader intent.

A second example is the intercession motif in Hebrews such as appears in 7:25. David Hay has suggested that the author may have taken over this idea from Christian tradition associated with the session of Christ at God's right hand (cf. Rom. 8:34).[74] He notes, however, that 'this idea of eternal intercession is something of a "foreign body" in the epistle's theology', not least because it creates a minor tension with the author's motif of the finality of Christ's sacrifice. The author's primary use of the session theme is to show that Christ *completed* his sacrificial, high priestly work with one offering and then sat down, only 'waiting that his enemies be placed under his feet' (10:12-13). Caution must clearly be taken in interpretation when the author has incorporated traditional material into the text.

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[72]*Voice* 110. A slightly different kind of discontinuity can result when one of the gospel writers does not use all of his (or her) source material. Luke in his passion narrative, for example, transposes the mockery of the Roman soliders from the morning before the crucifixion (as in Mk. 15:16-20) to the crucifixion itself (Lk. 23:36-38). Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemene to the Grave*, vol. 1 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994) 71 n. 82, notes that this transposition creates an awkwardness in the reading of the text of Luke 23:26, for Pilate now appears to hand Jesus over to the Jewish authorities and people to be crucified, rather than to the solidiers as in Mark. Brown contends that the 'awkward' situation is an oversight on Luke's part, rather than an intended meaning. These kinds of difficulties demonstrate for Moore the untenability of the narrative critics' belief that texts can and should be read as unities (*Literary Criticism* 33-34).

[73]Since Hebrews uses the masculine pronoun to refer to God (e. g. 2:10) and for convenience, I will go ahead and use the masculine pronoun of God in this study.

[74]*Glory and the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973) 132.

b. Tensions resulting from the use of figurative language

Apparent disunity not only results when one does not take the historical circumstances of composition fully into view, but can also seem present when an author is using metaphorical or symbolic language. When interpreting metaphors or symbols, it is important, first of all, to recognise them as such and then to distinguish carefully the degree to which an author has integrated them with surrounding material. Moore, for example, uses Jesus' thirst on the cross in John 19:28 as an example of how meaning can deconstruct itself in a text, contrasting this occurrence with Jesus' statement to the woman at the well concerning the superiority of the spiritual drink he offers over earthly water (Jn. 4:13-14). The Jesus who offers the spiritual water which overcomes the need for earthly water must drink earthly water on the cross.[75] To Moore, this imagery demonstrates that even a stable meaning such as the superiority of heavenly water proves to be unstable in the final analysis. For him, this conflict in imagery is an example of the disunity of texts, as well as an implicit critique of narrative critics who assume textual unity.

Of course, a narrative critic can construct a coherent meaning if this thirsting is seen ironically. Alan Culpepper writes, 'With profound irony, the giver of living water must himself thirst (19:28), and the giver of good wine must drink vinegar or common wine.'[76] Both Culpepper and Moore also refer to the statement of Raymond Brown: 'Jesus who is the source of living water (vii 38) cries out in thirst — he thus signifies that he must die before the living water can be given ... .'[77] A unity, therefore, may be possible even within the symbolic world of the gospel.

If there is a genuine tension, however, between the theme of heavenly water and the scene on the cross, unity can still be maintained if one correctly evaluates the level on which the language is functioning in each case. From a 'diachronic' perspective, this tension is easily explained in terms of the tradition which John inherited and upon which he built his gospel. The image of Jesus thirsting on the cross is used because the offering of vinegar is a part of the tradition John inherited. It also relates to Psalm 69:21 (68:22 LXX) and may have even been introduced into the tradition as a fulfillment of this scripture.[78]

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[75]*Literary Criticism* 159f.

[76]*Anatomy* 195.

[77]*The Gospel According to John*, vol. 2, Anchor (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966) 930.

[78]A possibility C. K. Barrett mentions, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1961) 553.

The theme of spiritual water, on the other hand, is a metaphor which the author employs. The language seems to be functioning in a different way in each of the two instances.

Hebrews 10:20 is an example in our epistle of the problems associated with the unity of texts when figurative language is involved. There has been some debate in the history of scholarship over what is here equated with the flesh of Jesus. As we shall argue below in chapter 5, the most obvious grammatical reading of the text equates the flesh of Jesus with the veil of the tabernacle.[79] B. F. Westcott has written of this verse, 'Such a thought is strange and difficult .... It remains surprising that "the flesh" of Christ should be treated in any way as a veil, an obstacle, to the vision of God in a place where stress is laid on His humanity.'[80] Such a use of veil language also does not seem to fit well with the function of the veil in 6:19, where it seems to be something to be surpassed, an obstacle. When moving toward the intention of the author, clearly this is a point where a tension within the text is felt because of the use of figurative language.

One wonders whether the author actually thought through how this symbol might fit with his other use of veil language earlier in the epistle.[81] It seems likely that this particular metaphorical use of the veil is limited to this verse, a 'daring, poetical touch' which does not extend beyond this context.[82] One must be careful when interpreting figurative language, therefore, not to presume that such imagery will be used consistently in the same way or that it will correspond completely with language which functions on a different level in other contexts.

The preceding presents important factors regarding the unity of an author's thought which must be considered when one is trying to move from a text to the intended meaning of the author. The incorporation of traditional or source material, for example, can sometimes result in 'extraneous meaning' which does not in fact correspond to the author's intent. Similarly, if figurative language is not read within its intended bounds, a disunified reading of the text can result. These are significant cautions which one must take into account when moving from the text toward the author's intended meaning.

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[79]See chapter 5 pp. 174f.

[80]*The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1892) 320. In the light of these theological problems, Westcott and Hurst both opt out for the less problematic association of 'flesh' with 'way'.

[81]Even 6:19 is metaphorical, although on a more epistle wide level than 10:20. See chapter 5, p. 161, 174-75.

[82]An often quoted phrase used by J. Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924) 143.

2. Gaps in meaning

Another aspect of texts which can pose problems in attempting to reconstruct authorial intent is 'gaps' in meaning. One of the principal figures to deal with this aspect of texts is Wolfgang Iser in what he has termed a 'phenomenological' approach.[83] Iser stands, of course, within that movement in literary studies known as 'reader-response'. While narrative criticism and structuralism have indicated certain problems in moving from text to author, reader-response criticism draws our attention to other basic difficulties involving the readers of a text. It will be helpful to give a brief overview of these problems before returning to Iser and textual gaps.

First of all, whereas it has been noted that the author of a biblical text is not available to the modern reader, there is also a sense in which the text is not fully available to the reader either. That is to say, if such a thing as meaning in a text exists, any given reader can never fully overcome his or her own worldview in order to apprehend that meaning, let alone an original author's intent. Since no reader of a text can overcome their own subjectivity, there are, in a sense, as many texts as there are readers. In a very real way, no text exists apart from the person reading it.

Further, since every reader interprets a text from within an interpretative framework, it seems unlikely that there actually is an 'absolute' meaning to a text; rather, there are meanings which derive from the various hermeneutical methods and 'reading schemes' used by various interpretative communities. The end result of these two aspects of reading is that there is not one, single meaning of a text. There are multiple valid meanings which correspond to reading communities and multiple meanings within those bodies which correspond to the individuals using each interpretative scheme.

It would take us far beyond the scope of this study to go into the various theoretical discussions involved in a justification of the attempt to recover authorial intent. We would merely assert *pragmatically* that there is such a thing as a 'better interpretation' within a certain reading scheme and interpretative community.[84] Stanley Fish has suggested in his later work that

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[83]A helpful summary of his approach can be found in his article 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach', in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by J. P. Tompkins (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University, 1980). A fuller treatment occurs in Iser's book, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction From Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University, 1974).

[84]A discussion of deconstruction, which denies that language has any fixed meaning at all (e. g. J. Derrida: 'Nothing ... is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces' *Positions*, trans. by A. Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981] 26), would also take us far afield of our objective. We shall simply assume that *pragmatically*, people can and do commonly agree that sentences have meaning (Klemm, *Theory* 74f and Ricoeur, *Theory* 6-8, have

there can be a stable meaning to a text if 'one means by text the structure of meanings that is obvious and inescapable from the perspective of whatever interpretive assumptions happen to be in force.'[85] Fish accepts to a high degree, therefore, that texts can have stable meanings within interpretative communities. This notion of Fish lends validation to this study, since our investigation proceeds from certain definite assumptions and follows a certain hermeneutical scheme.

To what interpretative community, therefore, can this study be said to belong? On the one hand, the assumptions with which this study proceeds place it by and large in the domain of what has been called 'critical realism'. N. T. Wright, in *The New Testament and the People of God*, defines critical realism as a way of describing the process of knowing which takes into account both 'the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower', on the one hand, while also acknowledging that the only access to this reality is through a 'spiralling path' of 'conversation between the knower and the thing known.'[86] At least for pragmatic reasons, our study will proceed under these assumptions.

On a more specific level, this study also falls within that community which reads biblical texts in an attempt to approach the intended meanings of the historical author, a historical individual who himself was part of yet another 'interpretative community' with another worldview. We proceed with the belief that a good number of the 'assumptions' of the author's worldview can at least be 'transformed' into roughly equivalent forms in our own. It is assumed that one can know at least some generalities about an ancient culture. It is also the belief of this study that such an investigation is facilitated by certain patterns of human thought which seem to be common to both to an ancient writer such as the author of Hebrews and a modern reader (e. g. cause-effect, contrast-comparison, etc.). All of these factors contribute to the possibility of understanding the meaning(s) intended by the original author, although the

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critiqued deconstruction on the basis of an elevation of word over sentence, since there is a hiatus between these two levels of meaning. A sentence has a sense and a reference and refers to a world, whereas a word relates to a signified which is merely a signifier for something else.).

[85]*Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1980) vii.

[86]*The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 1992) 35. Wright implies a 'dialogue' with the text which takes into account that all 'knowing' is done from an individual point of view (there is no God's eye point of view to which a human is privy) and acknowledges that all apprehension of reality is provisional at best. As this epistemology impacts hermeneutics, the full problems of reading are acknowledged (the text has a life of its own; no reading is 'neutral observation'), while more positive possibilities are affirmed (authors have intentions which can be ascertained to some extent; a text can have a particular viewpoint from which everything is seen). Wright terms such an approach a 'hermeneutic of love' (*People* 64).

point of view from which the study is undertaken will always detract from this goal. The study assumes on the whole, however, that the goal itself is largely intact, even if apprehension of the goal can never be fully achieved.

Since we have clarified our attitude toward the movement of reader to text, we can return to the question of gaps in meaning. These are the inevitable product of any composition, for there will always be information which is not stated in the text but which is necessary in order to understand the author's intent. Iser writes of these gaps that 'they may be filled in different ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way ... .'[87] Although Iser is focusing on narratives, the idea of gaps applies equally to non-narrative material, especially a text like Hebrews whose historical context is largely unknown.

It should be unnecessary at this point to refer again to the many unknowns relative to Hebrews. It should be obvious that the epistle has left glaring gaps for 'readers' to fill in with hypotheses and historical information. When one considers that names as unlikely as Aristion[88] and the Blessed Virgin[89] have been suggested as authors of the epistle, one begins to realise the impact which gaps can have upon interpretation. A myriad of examples could be brought forth demonstrating the various ways in which gaps both great and small have been filled in by various interpreters, not least those we have already presented with regard to the background question.

While the larger gaps of occasion and ideological background are the ultimate driving forces behind this study, its nature as a text-orientated investigation means that the smaller gaps of meaning which occur in a general reading of the text will play a more immediate role than these larger ones. More than anything else, it will be important methodologically for this study to be self-conscious of the way in which it fills in these smaller gaps in meaning. It will therefore be important to state clearly throughout the study the level of certainty with which it has made various hypotheses and to resist methodically the urge to pursue elaborate schemes which rest on multiple assumptions. While it may engage in speculation, it should do so self-consciously, carefully noting the degrees of certainty. Obviously such a model is easier to state than to

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[87]'Process' 55.

[88]J. Chapman, 'Aristion, Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *RBén* 22 (1905) 50-62.

[89]J. M. Ford, 'The Mother of Jesus and the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The University of Dayton Review* 11 (1975) 49-56.

follow and an important measurement of its success will be the degree to which it heeds its own advice.

3. Summary

We have attempted in this section to delineate in general what we mean when we state that we are attempting to conduct a 'text-orientated' study of Hebrews. We distinguished our approach, for example, from those text-centred studies which profess to approach the text without unnecessary recourse to background information, stating clearly that our interest is in the intent and context of the historical author. We utilised these text-centred methods, however, in order to clarify the kinds of hermeneutical factors involved in the reading of texts which any study involving a discourse must take into account.

The first of these was the acknowledgement that an author does not have ultimate control over the meanings which his or her text can potentially have. We accepted from the start that 'authorial intention' is in some ways more of a theoretical goal than an actual attainability. We then delineated the two principal reasons for this 'autonomy' of the text from its author's intended meaning, namely the disunity of texts and gaps in meaning.

The disunity of texts as it relates to the study of Hebrews manifests itself in two principal ways, namely, its utilisation of traditions and source material and its use of different levels of language. The use of Old Testament citations and the use of traditional material can at times introduce 'extraneous meaning' into a discourse which may conflict with or create a tension with the real agenda or theology of the author. Similarly, one must always be cautious of the extent to which the author is using various imagery or metaphorical language, particularly in a rhetorical context such as Hebrews where the author may be using language which, while persuasive to his audience, does not actually represent his own categories of thought.

The second way in which a text becomes autonomous from its author is in the 'gaps' in meaning which are inevitably created in the process of composition. These gaps result in a text which can give rise to several interpretative options at any given point. Readers automatically fill in these gaps on the basis of their own subjectivity, which itself is a function of the 'interpretative community' to which they belong and which provides them with a certain hermeneutic and reading scheme. We stated in broad terms that our study falls within that interpretative community which reads texts with the aim of approaching authorial intent (historically orientated), while realising that this goal was not completely attainable (critical realism).

With the above boundary factors taken into consideration, we set down a 'rule of self-consciousness' in filling in gaps, in each case being careful to note the limits of our knowledge. We acknowledge that interpretation is a dialogue between text and reader. Background historical knowledge will ultimately be a part of our interpretation, but it must be used to choose between interpretative options raised by the text itself rather than in a movement in the opposite direction. Gaps can thus be filled from general historical knowledge. Knowledge of ancient rhetoric and Jewish or Christian exegetical practice, for example, may help to eliminate certain interpretative options.

B. A narrative hermeneutic

The above constitutes a general text-orientated hermeneutic which is appropriate for the interpretation of any biblical text when one's desire is to approach methodically the author's original intent while avoiding as much as possible 'extraneous meaning'. The above discussion has thus offered considerations which, if heeded, would fairly take into account our first criterion that this study be text-orientated, but it has not given us any basis for meeting the other criteria we have set for this study in our desire to delineate the precise contours of the author's thought.

In the following part of our discussion of method, our purpose will be to present a general theoretical framework within which the three other criteria we set for our study can be met, namely, the requirement for a method which 1) takes the whole epistle into account, 2) reconstructs the author's thought world in categories appropriate to his own framework of thinking, and 3) takes the possible distinction in outlook between author and reader seriously. We will argue below that a hermeneutical model of 'story and discourse', is capable of meeting two of these criteria, utilising the whole text (discourse) in order to project a thought world (story), while the final requirement can be fulfilled by taking into account rhetorical features of the discourse such as the distinction between author and reader.

Once again, the study engages in this enterprise in order to arrive at a systematic overview of the author's thought which will make it subsequently possible to determine how the author might have utilised and combined various traditions. The story and discourse model will facilitate best an examination of the author's whole thought but is only indirectly related to the background question. As we have already indicated, such a study is valid in its own right but also serves as an important prolegomena for approaching the background question on the broader level of the epistle.

By way of presentation, therefore, this section will first discuss the story and discourse model in general and then defend the use of the category of story in relation to Hebrews in particular. Finally, we will discuss some general features of Hebrews' rhetorical structure which relate to this discussion.

1. The story and discourse model

Among the various approaches to texts which have been made in recent hermeneutical theory, a common element in several analyses is the idea that there are at least two aspects to the meaning of a text, namely, a sense and a reference. This terminology originated with Frege and is taken over by Ricoeur in his approach to interpretation.[90] Ricoeur speaks of the sense in terms of the structure of a text, its composition, genre, and style. The reference, on the other hand, is the 'world of the text', that 'reality' to which the sense refers and which is the object of understanding. Interpretation, therefore, seeks to understand a text by moving from its structure and 'sense' to the world which it creates, that is, its reference.

This scheme is quite analogous to the terminology of narrative criticism when it treats a narrative in terms of 'story and discourse'. Seymour Chatman, in his book *Story and Discourse*, provides the foundation for narrative criticism when he writes,

> Structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (*discours*), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*.[91]

A plot, therefore, is a 'story-as-discoursed' into one of many possible realisations.[92] Chatman, therefore, clearly stands in the structuralist tradition, which sees a general story structure which can be 'objectified' in numerous 'discourses'.

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[90]For overviews of Ricoeur's interpretation theory, see his own *Interpretation Theory*, as well as Klemm, *Theory* and K. J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990).

[91]*Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1978) 19.

[92]*Story and Discourse* 43.

This is generally analogous, though not completely identical, to the 'sense and reference' distinction. The discourse, in Chatman's terms, relates to the 'sense' of Frege and Ricoeur. It is the 'structure' of the text itself. One might also compare it to the idea of surface structure in linguistics, that is, the sentences which confront a reader in the text.[93] The story, on the other hand, is that which stands behind the text, the 'reference' of the text. In the structuralist sense, this is the 'deep structure' (not in the linguistic sense) behind any story, a particular story conforming to the universal pattern which all stories can be said to follow.[94] It can be subjected, for example, to a Greimasian analysis of the sort conducted by Patte and others who have applied structuralism to the New Testament in one way or another.

This deeper, story structure to a narrative can be studied in a less technical manner than is apparent in the analyses of structuralists, as narrative critics have demonstrated. As in Chatman's analysis above, events, characters, and settings exist on the level of story and (theoretically) can be examined in 'abstraction' from the text. These three aspects of a story are incorporated into the structuralist model as well, but in a more technical way. In structuralism, events correspond to the various 'syntagms' within the 'sequences' of the structuralist scheme, while characters correspond to the various 'actants' in its 'actantial model'. Finally, the settings of a story can correspond to the parameters of the movement of a 'subject' in the acceptance of a 'contract' or can function as 'helpers' or 'opponents' in a given syntagm.[95]

Narrative criticism, on the other hand, discusses these aspects of stories in a much more accessible manner. Events, characters, and settings form three general headings under which the underlying story of a text can be examined. On the level of discourse, on the other hand, the actual point of view from which the particular objectified story is told, the relation of discourse time to story time, aspects of the particular narration, and other such 'surface' characteristics are discussed.[96]

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[93]Cf., e.g. P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989) 228, n. 28.

[94]Cf. Patte, *Structural Exegesis* 24-25. Ricoeur takes exception to the basic presuppositions of structuralism since it views language as a closed system and removes it as a mediation between 'minds and things', making it cease to be a 'form of life' (*Theory* 2-8).

[95]Patte's discussion of the structuralist model is dense and cumbersome, *Structural Exegesis*, chapter 3. A much clearer, albeit simplified, version can be found in R. Hays' *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, SBLDS 56 (Chico: Scholars, 1983) 92-103.

[96]Cf. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, chapters 3-6. Moore, *Literary Criticism* 60-61, claims by way of critique that the whole narrative enterprise works on the level of discourse (or on the level of rhetoric, as D. Rhoads and D. Michie term it in *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982] 35-62), and that to 'abstract' from a narrative is only to create another

2. Stories and non-narrative material

The structuralist and narrative critical model of story and discourse obviously applies to narrative material, but one might wonder how it might be of use in understanding a non-narrative discourse like Hebrews. It is a fundamental thesis of this study that the category of story is not only applicable, but in fact stands as the fundamental framework from which the argument of the epistle emerges; that is, the principal mode of argument in the epistle of Hebrews is the referencing of the story of salvation history as conceived by the author. The heavenly and earthly realms are the settings of key events in a story whose characters include God, angels, the people of God, and, most significantly, Christ. To the extent that Hebrews, or Christianity in general for that matter, is fundamentally eschatological, to that extent it is fundamentally 'narrative'.[97]

As will be contended, Hebrews involves a mixture of exposition and paraenesis which either flows from or is substantiated by reference to the story of salvation history. Although principally non-narrative on the level of its discourse, Hebrews is thoroughly narrative with respect to the 'story world' to which it refers in its argument. The exact nature of the settings of the key events in this story is in fact that on which much of the background question turns. What is it about the heavenly realm and the heavenly tabernacle within it that provides the proper setting for the principal event of salvation history? Is there something fundamental to the earthly, created realm which precludes the efficaciousness of sacrifices there? These categories are therefore poignantly relevant to our ultimate desire to delineate the background(s) of Hebrews and satisfy our requirement that our hermeneutic be derived from the author's own way of thinking. A narrative framework is thus an appropriate model for structuring our study.[98]

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discourse (67). He claims that the distinction between form and content is not viable and that it is therefore impossible to speak of abstracted content (64). While we are in partial agreement with Moore, we contend that the re*form*ulation of discourses into such topical headings is a *useful* process and therefore valid.

[97]In general I will follow the distinction between narratives, which are actual discourses, and stories, which are the so called 'abstracted' content of narratives (following Hays, *Faith* 17ff). The most appropriate adjective for something which is in the category of story, however, is that which I use here, 'narrative'.

[98]As is apparent, our study has become somewhat complex. Our ultimate goal is to shed light on the background question on the level of the whole epistle, taking into account the likely possibility that the author has creatively combined various 'traditions'. In order to do that properly, we concluded that it was first necessary to delineate the way in which the various parts of the author's thought fit together to form a coherent whole. The most appropriate model for approaching this goal, we now argue, is by utilising the distinction between story and discourse in order to reconstruct the author's thought world. The end result is a study which is certainly valid in its own right and which serves as important

One study which demonstrates the possibility of using the category of narrative to study epistolary material is Richard Hays' *The Faith of Jesus Christ.*[99] In his study, Hays refers to scholars such as Northrop Frye, Robert Funk, and Ricoeur to support three main hypotheses. First of all, he claims that 'stories have an inherent configurational dimension (*dianoia*) which not only permits but also demands restatement and interpretation in non-narrative language.'[100] In this statement Hays is using some of Ricoeur's terms in his essay, 'The Narrative Function', where he speaks of an 'episodic' and a 'configurational' dimension to narrative.[101] These correspond to his sense and reference distinction. The 'episodic' dimension of story is the surface structure of a discourse, the structure of the story as it is presented in the text or as it is heard. There is also a 'configurational' operation performed by the hearer or reader, however, which constructs the 'world of the text', that is, the reference beyond the surface. Hays relates this to the distinction between *mythos* and *dianoia* made first by Aristotle and extended by Frye.[102] *Mythos* is the plot, the sequence of events. The *dianoia*, on the other hand, is the pattern, the 'simultaneous unity' perceived 'when the entire shape of the story is clear in our minds.' In the light of this, Hays suggests, 'that Paul's thematic expositions may be understood as reflections upon the configuration of a particular story.'[103]

In addition, Hays suggests two other points, namely, that '[t]he reflective statement does not simply repeat the plot (*mythos*) of the story' and that

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prolegomena to answering the background issue. It, nevertheless, does not answer the question in and of itself. It only provides the proper basis for answering the question in a subsequent study. Our final conclusion, therefore, will only be able to point in the right direction for the answer, rather than providing a final answer.

[99]Another study which has applied the category of narrative to epistolary material in a slightly different way is N. Petersen's *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Petersen looks at Philemon in terms of the story surrounding the writing of the epistle as projected from the epistle itself. He is primarily interested in joining a sociological analysis of the occasion of the epistle to literary categories. He is thus interested in the historical 'story' of the writing of Philemon.

[100]*Faith* 28.

[101]'The Narrative Function' *Semeia* 13 (1978) 183-84.

[102]*Faith* 21f. See also in general Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1957) 52, 131ff and especially *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963) 24.

[103]*Faith* 24. Hays sees Funk's idea that Paul works in a 'mode of recapitulation' as a precendent for his own work (26 in reference to Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* [New York: Harper & Row, 1966] 247). Paul reiterates the significance of the story of Christ to communities like the Galatians, which Funk would express as 'primary reflectivity' upon the 'foundational language' of the gospel story (*Language* 232-33).

whenever reflective discourse of this kind is encountered, 'it is legitimate and possible to inquire about the story in which it is rooted.'[104] His second point reflects to some degree the influence of formalism in secular literary criticism and its contention that form and content are not separable.[105] Although formalism may be subject to critique, surely the conclusion Hays has drawn here is correct, as anyone who has read a book or seen a movie can testify when confronted with a summary or critique of the same — a story cannot be abstracted and still be the same story with the same exact meaning and impact.[106] The third point follows the preceding two naturally and is the theoretical basis for Hays' study of some of Paul's 'recapitulations' of the story in Galatians 3.1-4.11. It also intimates the theoretical premises of this study, since we are also interested in the story which stands behind the epistle to the Hebrews.

In the light of the above, the narrative model of story and discourse would seem to offer possibilities for analysing the epistle to the Hebrews. On the level of discourse, Hebrews does not belong to a narrative genre. It is an epistle, or more accurately, a 'sent-homily'. It is permeated, however, with the story of God's decisive work in the person of Christ, and all of the practical admonitions which the author makes flow from the implications of that story. Even the present situation of the recipients of the letter is a part of that story, for they are also the people of God, who, like other characters in the grand 'plot', are confronted with the choice either to harden their hearts, as those who did not enter into God's rest, or to join the 'great cloud of witnesses' who were 'of faith leading to the obtaining of life'. This story of salvation history of which they are a part is the 'world of the text' to which the discourse of Hebrews points.

3. Rhetorical features of Hebrews

Approaching Hebrews through the model of story and discourse provides a framework by which one can utilise the whole epistle in order to construct a 'thought world' standing behind the author's argument. This theoretical framework, therefore, affords the meeting of the second and third criteria which we set out for our study. It remains to discuss the way in which the fourth criterion might be met, namely, the importance of recognising the potential

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[104]*Faith* 28.

[105]As indicated by his dependence on Frye.

[106]As we have already noted, Moore, *Literary Criticism* 64-68, takes this fact to imply the impossibility of any abstraction of 'content' from a story (see also above, n. 97). Hays' conclusion is more reasonable because he limits such a possibility, rather than denying it altogether.

difference in outlook between the author and the recipients of Hebrews. There are also matters of 'surface structure' or aspects of the 'discourse' of Hebrews which should also be mentioned before we conclude our discussion of method. These matters of structure, genre,[107] and rhetoric combine to provide potential indicators of author/audience distinctions.

The structure of Hebrews is a much debated issue which goes well beyond the scope of the present investigation, although we will inevitably encounter such questions in the process of interpretation.[108] Similarly, questions of rhetorical species, whether Hebrews is primarily 'epideictic'[109] or 'deliberative',[110] involve us in matters which are significant, but unnecessary to treat in depth.[111] There are nevertheless some key aspects of these two discussions which should be mentioned before the investigation begins.

The first of these is the fact that the content of Hebrews is most certainly meant to persuade. Although there may be elements of both praise and blame (epideictic) and elements moving the audience to future action (deliberative), it is clear that the author is trying both to convince the recipients of the surety of Christian faith (epideictic) and to move them to the appropriate actions which result from it (deliberative). Since our criteria require us to take account of the whole epistle, it will be important for us to note how the author and his audience are a part of the story of salvation history and how this story gives rise to exhortation.

While we will not stake our study upon any particular understanding of the literary structure of Hebrews, there are key rhetorical points in the author's attempt to persuade which should be noted. The first of these is the exordium (1:1-4) which in many respects provides an overview of the basic points of the epistle's theological argumentation. Another key point is 2:17-18, which is

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[107]I am using the word *genre* in a broad sense and not, for example, as M. Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, trans. by M. A. Williams, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 3, does in his technical definition of paraenesis: 'By paraenesis we mean a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content.' I will use terms like paraenesis and exposition in a more general sense.

[108]For overviews of the discussion, as well as the most recent contributions to the debate, see Übelacker, *Appell* and G. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, SNT 73 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

[109]So Attridge, *Hebrews* 14.

[110]So Übelacker, *Appell* 219 and B. Lindars, 'The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews' *NTS* 35 (1989) 383.

[111]It seems clear that Hebrews has elements of both species, although we view it primarily as a deliberative document.

either the basic proposition of the author's argument[112] or is at least the announcement of the subject of the next few chapters.[113] We consider 5:11-6:12 to be of great importance in terms of the author's exhortation to the community, given its central location and interruption of the argument flow. 8:1-2 are also deemed significant to us, because they present the κεφάλαιον of what the author is saying. Finally 10:19ff and chapter 13 are important, the former because it demonstrates the hortatory inferences which the author wishes to draw from his main theological argumentation in the previous section, and the latter because it brings the whole epistle to a close and therefore has certain summary features. Each of these passages will help us apprehend the main rhetorical features of the discourse of Hebrews.

The second principal aspect of this rhetorical situation follows closely on the first. The desire to persuade gives rise to two broad categories of 'surface' material in Hebrews, namely, exposition and exhortation. Both of these genres relate to the more fundamental story of salvation history of which the recipients are a part, but they relate in different ways. By exposition we mean those sections of the epistle which focus primarily on explicating the story without immediately drawing out implications for the readers.[114] Hortatory material, on the other hand, not only reflects on the story but directly applies that story to the situation of the audience.[115] These two functions of language within the discourse of the epistle form a balanced pair. 'The paraenesis is not a perfunctory afterthought to a dogmatic treatise ... . Yet neither is the doctrinal exposition an unimaginative repetition of well-worn truths adduced to support an exhortation.'[116]

The epistle is replete with indications that the author perceives a real situation among his hearers and that he considers his exhortation to have the potential of saving the recipients from apostasy. The author seems to believe

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[112]Übelacker, *Appell* 193-96. I tend to favour this position.

[113]So A. Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. by J. Bryce, 6th ed (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1866) 335; F. Thien, 'Analyse de L'Épître aux Hébreux', *RB* 11 (1902) 80-81; L. Vaganay, 'Le Plan de L'Épître aux Hébreux', *Memorial Lagrange*, ed. by L.-H. Vincent (Paris: Gabalda, 1940) 438f; A. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2nd ed (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1976) 37ff; and the majority of scholarship since.

[114]I would identify this material as 1:1-14; 2:5-18; 3:1-6; 5:1-10; and 7:1-10:18, agreeing with Guthrie for the most part, *Structure* 117.

[115]I consider 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; (4:14-16); 5:11-20; 10:19-12:29; and 13:1-25 as paraenetic in one way or another, again agreeing in most cases with Guthrie, *Structure* 127-134. See also the discussion in Übelacker, *Appell* 41.

[116]Attridge, *Hebrews* 21.

that his audience has slackened in their faithfulness,[117] lost some of their appreciation of the significance of Christ's death and session,[118] and that they could potentially return to inadequate understandings of the story.[119] His expositions clearly are used to address these concerns, as can be seen by the way in which his transitional words and phrases move from reflections on the story to exhortation, including 'διὰ τοῦτό' (2:1), 'ὅθεν' (3:1), 'διό' (3:7), 'οὖν' (4:1, 6, 11, 14, 16; 10:19, 35; 13:15), 'ὥστε' (13:6), and 'τοιγαροῦν' (12:1), all of which demonstrate that paraenesis comes as a consequence of exposition. The strong words of the author, denying the recipients a second opportunity for repentance if they apostasise (6:4-8, 10:26-31; 12:15-17), deeming them 'νωθροὶ ... ταῖς ἀκοαῖς' (6:11), do not seem to be a mere attempt to 'inculcate values'[120] but a genuine attempt 'zu motivieren'.[121]

As the study progresses, we will develop more specific thoughts on the structure of Hebrews' argument and of the way in which the author's exposition is used to persuade his audience. Our concluding chapter in particular will attempt to place the author and recipients of Hebrews in their appropriate place within the plot of salvation history. For the moment, a general regard for the way in which the author uses exposition as a basis for exhortation will suffice to make us aware of the difference between author and audience which stands behind the whole of the epistle.

C. Eschatology and cosmology in Hebrews

The preceding discussion has sketched a method which takes into account the four criteria we set for a study which aims at analysing the thought world of Hebrews on its own terms in order to make possible a more accurate

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[117]As seen in passages like 5:11-14; 10:35-39; 12:12-13; and the persuasive terminology of retreat, e.g. παραρρέω (2:1), ἀμελέω (2:3), ὑστερέω (4:1; 12:15), παραπίπτω (6:6), ἐγκαταλείπω (10:25), ἀθετέω and καταπατέω (10:28-29), ἀποβάλλω (10:35), ὑποστολή (10:39), κάμνω (12:3), ἐκλύομαι (12:3), παραιτέομαι (12:25), ἐπιλανθάνομαι (13:2, 16), παραφέρω (13:9); and encouragement, e.g. προσέχω (2:1), κατέχω (3:6, 14; 10:23), σπουδάζω (4:11), κρατέω (4:14; 6:18), προσέρχομαι (4:16; 10:22), ἀναμιμνήσκω (10:32), ὄγκον ἀποθῆναι and τρέχω (12:1), χεῖρας καὶ γόνατα ἀνορθοῦν (12:12), ἐχεῖν χάριν (12:28), ἐξέρχομαι (13:13).

[118]Which helps to explain the 'main point' of the epistle (8:1).

[119]As might be inferred from passages such as 5:12-13; 13:7-12, and especially 11:13-16. In the light of these and the preceding verses, it is highly unlikely that the author does not at least perceive a real situation of potential crisis among his audience which he is trying to address.

[120]Attridge, *Hebrews* 14, 158: 5:11-6:3 offers 'a challenge to the addressees to progress toward a truly mature faith' and not a 'precise indictment'.

[121]Übelacker, *Appell* 220.

examination of the background question. We have suggested that a hermeneutic based on the distinction between story and discourse, when bolstered by considerations involving texts in general and the rhetorical situation of Hebrews in particular, provides a solid basis upon which to satisfy the necessary criteria. It now remains to plot a course through Hebrews which will efficiently move from its discourse to its story.

We have alluded above to the fact that all stories have three basic components: a plot, characters, and settings. We do not wish to engage in the technical treatments which are involved when one analyses a text through structuralist eyes. These three basic story components are nevertheless suggestive as to how we might approach Hebrews in order to elicit the story of salvation which lies behind it.

Of these three, the plot no doubt provides a basic structure within which the other two subsist, since it is the basic storyline of events. It is therefore an appropriate place to begin the study and corresponds to the horizontal dimension of the epistle, its temporal aspect. Of the other two, the settings are most crucial for our purposes, for the background question has often turned on the nature of the heavenly tabernacle or of Christ's passage into heaven. It is none other than the vertical dimension of the epistle, its spatial aspect. Characterisation provides the least insight for our purpose and can be dealt with under the other headings. An appropriate study, therefore, could consist of two principal treatments, first of the plot of salvation history according to the epistle and then of the nature of the settings of this plot. In both cases, Hebrews provides appropriate categories in order to flesh out these components of the story.

With respect to the plot of salvation history, the very introduction to the epistle presents a fundamental contrast between former days and 'these last days'. As we shall argue in chapter 2, this latter phrase signals the fact that the author believes himself and his recipients to be living in an eschatological age, the time of the fulfilment of all that has gone before. The argument and story upon which it draws, therefore, is eschatologically orientated. The drama has moved into its final act, whose conclusion is rapidly approaching. The plot of salvation history, therefore, consists of two broad epochs which overlap each other, creating the 'yesterday, today, and forever' of the epistle.

We have therefore entitled the first half of this study 'The Eschatological Nature of the Plot', which will set out the basic storyline of the author's narrative world. We have considered it easiest to elucidate the plot first by an exploration of the discontinuities between the two broad epochs and then by a consideration of the overall continuity which exists throughout the story. This approach is appropriate because of the decisive nature of the central event of Hebrews' plot and the fact that it is the nature of the change brought about by

this event which forms the basic point of argument for the author. The discontinuities (chapter 2) seem best approached under the rubric of the new covenant idea, which arguably underlies the entirety of the author's argument. The continuities (chapter 3), on the other hand, can be seen in terms of the constant destiny which God has purposed for his people throughout the whole of the story. While these studies will be conducted along standard exegetical lines, they will give rise to 'configurational' data which will be utilised in the final analysis of the narrative world as a whole.

The settings of Hebrews seem to be accounted for fully by two general spheres, namely, that of heaven and that of the created realm.[122] The cosmology of Hebrews, therefore, subsumes the matter of the epistle's settings and can be conveniently treated under a chapter exploring the nature of the created realm (chapter 4) and one which examines heaven and its tabernacle (chapter 5). Once again, while these investigations will be largely exegetical, they will provide the reflection on the story necessary to present a complete presentation of the epistle's narrative world (chapter 6).

III. *Conclusion*

This chapter began with a brief overview of the various answers which have been proposed concerning the proper background against which to interpret Hebrews. We noted several points at which errors of method appeared repeatedly in the discussion. Studies have too often concentrated more on parallels in the literature than on the text itself or have focused on particular passages in Hebrews to the exclusion of other important aspects of the author's thought. Sometimes a single background has been presupposed to the exclusion of other crucial contexts, such as that of early Christianity itself. In addition, the possibility that Hebrews comes out of a rhetorical context in which the author had a difference in outlook from his readers has sometimes been overlooked.

This overview, therefore, painted a picture in which scholarship has reached a plateau in its attempt to identify the precise background of Hebrews. We noted that Lincoln Hurst's recent monograph could be said to mark the close of the attempt to place Hebrews within one dominant non-Christian tradition such as Platonism or Gnosticism. We also claimed that there was a general consensus that, more than anything else, Hebrews is a document of early

[122]If there were such a thing as a world of Platonic forms in Hebrews, we might expand this list, but heuristically, the category of heaven should suffice to bring out (or not bring out as we shall see) its presence.

Christianity and that primitive Christian tradition is the most determinative factor behind its perspectives and argument.

We also argued that the only way truly to move forward beyond the present state of the discussion was to take a different approach from that of preceding scholarship, one which would be noted for its particular method perhaps even more than for the precise conclusions which it reaches. It was suggested that such an approach should avoid the pitfalls of the previous debate by holding rigorously to four basic criteria: 1) such a study must be a text-orientated approach; 2) it must examine the text as a whole; 3) it must allow the text as much as possible to project its own thought world; and 4) it must consider the potential distinction between author and readers. It was considered that a study which carefully followed these four criteria would constitute a unique examination of Hebrews unlike previous attempts to approach the background question.

The chapter then set about to derive a specific method which would take the criteria fully into consideration while moving toward the issue of background. Because Hebrews may represent a mixture of traditions, it was concluded that any study which wished to delineate such a combination would need to examine the thought world of the epistle on its own terms as a necessary precursor for approaching the background question in terms of the epistle as a whole. Only a study which investigated the whole text in order to reconstruct a theoretical thought world would meet the necessary criteria. It was argued that such a study would be profitable and free standing in and of itself and would also constitute an important prolegomena for any attempt to answer the background question or similar issues. Some questions of tradition and milieu would need to be addressed in the course of such an investigation as they impinged upon the interpretation of certain pericopae, but they would not be the principal focus of the work. The study would pave the way, however, for the possibility of a future attempt to place Hebrews more fully.

It was finally determined that a hermeneutic along the lines of a 'story and discourse' model would best serve the interests of the investigation. This is the case because this theoretical model relates the surface structure of a discourse to its thought world, which with regard to Hebrews is narrative in nature. While such a claim may not be obvious to all, we noted that all of the author's argumentation flows from his reflection upon the 'story' of salvation history, a story in which the author and recipients of Hebrews are also characters. This model more than anything else seemed an appropriate and innovative way of approaching the epistle while moving toward our general goal.

In conclusion, we noted that the story world of Hebrews could be delineated through two sub-investigations, the first of which would elucidate the

eschatology of the epistle and the second of which would examine the cosmology of Hebrews. The former investigation would uncover the plot in a way uniquely appropriate for Hebrews, since the plot finds a continuous thread in the movement of the story toward a predestined, eschatological conclusion. The latter discussion of cosmology, on the other hand, would provide a way in to the two settings of the plot, namely, heaven and the created realm. By delineating the epistle's thought with respect to these various aspects of the argument, we claimed that a 'configurational' dimension to Hebrews' narrative world would be elicited which could then be brought together in summary form. While answering some questions of background along the way, the study will hopefully prepare for future comparisons of Hebrews with proposed backgrounds, while also helping to place the epistle within the general flow of early Christianity.[123]

[123]It should be admitted that there may be matters relevant to the background issue which our study will not directly address. I do not claim that this study will answer every relevant question, only that it is in general a significant, balanced, and in some ways necessary precursor to delineating the epistle's background of thought.

PART I
THE ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE PLOT

CHAPTER 2
The New Covenant

I. *Introduction*

As was set out in the introduction, the purpose of this chapter is to begin to sketch out the storyline of Hebrews' narrative world by examining the way in which the author regarded the discontinuities between the old and new covenants in Hebrews. While on first glance one might suppose that the new covenant idea is mostly restricted to the central chapters of the epistle, this study will join a smaller group of scholars who have recognised its implicit presence in the whole epistle, even in the contrast of Christ with the angels. Although previous studies have seen such a connection,[1] we will pursue the relationship in more depth than most previous investigations.

The chapter will begin by examining the way in which the exordium of 1:1-4 presents the basic contrast between the old and new ages, which is programmatic for the epistle. It will note the connection between the phrase 'ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν' and the Jeremiah citation in chapter 8, clearly indicating that the new covenant idea reflects the fundamental eschatological contrast which itself gives form to the plot of salvation history. We will also discuss how the first two chapters fit within this basic contrast, developing suggestions made by G. B. Caird[2] and Lincoln Hurst[3] into a more complete form, while at the same time providing some substantiation for the rhetorical divisions of Keijo Nissalä[4] and Walter Übelacker.[5]

Next, the chapter will discuss the author's principal focus in his use of the new covenant motif, namely, the way in which the covenant introduced by

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[1]E.g. S. Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews*, JSNTSS 44 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 11: the new covenant idea is a 'linchpin' of the author's argument, 'without which the structure of the author's thinking would fall apart and lose its coherence', following G. Vos, 'Hebrews, Epistle of the *Diathêkê* ' *PTR* 13 (1915) 592. This connection has been made before, however. L. Hurst, for example, has also written, '*Auctor*'s concern with angels in chs. 1-2 does not appear to be a polemic but an attempt to prove the superiority of the new covenant to the old', *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990) 45, 78.

[2]'The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *CJT* 5 (1959) 44-51.

[3]'The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2', *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. by L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 151-64.

[4]*Der Hohepriestmotiv in Hebräerbrief: Eine exegetische Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Oy Liitun Kirjapaino, 1979) 24.

[5]*Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu* exordium, narratio, *und* postscriptum *(Hebr 1-2 and 13,22-25)*, CBNTS 21 (Lund: Almquist & Wiksell, 1989) 140-96.

Christ relates to the Law and its Levitical priesthood. We will suggest that this aspect of the new covenant contrast in particular is the locus of his concern and that the Law, old covenant, and Levitical priesthood are largely interchangeable terms in the argument, probably indicating the main focus of the author's rhetoric and thus pointing to an important direction in which one should look when seeking the occasion of the epistle.

Finally, we will begin an exploration of the dynamics of the author's use of the metaphor of high priesthood as a motif in the epistle. After demonstrating that this language is metaphorical by definition, we will argue that the author's use of it serves a primarily rhetorical purpose. This can be argued because the ultimate function of this language is to persuade the audience of the superiority of Christ's atonement over the Levitical cultus. The author's use of the metaphor is principally an extension and re-expression of traditional Christian language in new terms, although every metaphor entails new meaning.

We will support these claims by an investigation of the Melchizedek argument in chapter 7, concluding that this biblical figure is a foil which the author uses to speak of Christ as a high priest superior to those descended from Levi. We will also briefly examine how the author relates language of sacrifice and offering to traditional aspects of Christology, noting that a not wholly consistent use of language also supports our claims. An explication of the metaphorical nature of Hebrews' argument provides an important key to interpreting the hidden dynamics of the author's thought and is, in our opinion, the most important contribution our study makes to Hebrews scholarship.[6]

II. *The Two Ages*

From the beginning of Hebrews, the fundamental argument is structured on the basis of a contrast between the old and the new, the former age and the new covenant as it has been effected through Christ. In this respect, the first four verses not only provide the main theological theme of the epistle, but also set the eschatological context for the remainder by contrasting God's former manner of

[6]I am not claiming of course to be the first to notice that the author is utilising a metaphor. S. Nomoto's article, 'Herkunft und Struktur der Hohenpriestervorstellung im Hebräerbrief', *NovT* 10 (1968) 10-25, for example, anticipates many of my conclusions. There are also scattered allusions to the metaphorical nature of this language in the literature, such as J. Dunnill's insightful comment: 'what in fact does the complex argument of Hebrews amount to, except another variant, or transformation into cultic language, of the common Christian kerygma of Jesus as the Christ?', ***Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews***, SNTSMS 75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992) 261. I am not aware, however, of any study which explores the dynamics of this metaphor as completely as ours, nor of one which examines it in terms of the rhetorical situation behind the epistle.

'speaking' with his most recent agent of revelation: 'Although at many times and in many ways God formerly spoke to the fathers by the prophets, in these last days he spoke to us by a Son'. The fact that the author begins Hebrews in this way, making this contrast the setting for all that follows, argues that any metaphysical contrast the book might have should be interpreted squarely from within this eschatological framework.

The exordium of Hebrews thus divides salvation history into two categories of divine revelation. First of all, there was the former period of God's 'speaking'. This epoch, significantly, was characterised by a multiplicity and diversity of the times and ways in which God's revelation occurred (πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως — 1:1). The prophets in particular are mentioned in the proemium as the means by which God spoke to 'the fathers'. All of this diversity is contrasted with a single avenue of divine communication by which God has spoken 'to us'. In contrast to former revelations to the fathers, God has spoken 'ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων' to us by a Son (1:2). This Greek phrase is a Septuagentalism of 'באחרית הימים',[7] which is found in several places in the Old Testament, notably in the LXX of Jeremiah.[8] It thus ties in closely with the quotation of Jer. 31 (38 LXX):31-34 in chapter 8, as we shall argue below. This phrase in Jeremiah, along with the related clause 'ἡμέραι ἔρχονται'[9] and similar language, is used to refer to the time when God will have accomplished his purposes in the judgement and restoration of Israel and its surrounding nations. It is therefore thoroughly eschatological in nature and would probably have had messianic overtones for our author.[10]

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[7]As, for example, F. F. Bruce notes, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 3.

[8]G. W. Buchanan, 'Eschatology and the "End of Days"', *JNES* 20 (1961) 190, notes that the Hebrew phrase is translated four times by ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν (Num. 24:14; Jer. 23:20; 49:39 [25:18 LXX]; and Dan. 10:14); seven times by ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (Gen. 49:1; Deut 4:30 [the phrase here is actually ἐπ' ἐσχάτῳ τ. η.]; Jer. 30 [37]:24; Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 2:28; Hos. 3:5; and Mic. 4:1); and once by ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις (Is. 2:2). In his study he has denied any *fixed* eschatological content to such phrases either in the Old or New Testaments, *pace* W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1991) 10, who read Buchanan as saying that the term 'came to possess technical significance' of an eschatological nature. I hold, contrary to Buchanan, that the term in the New Testament (and in Jeremiah in a different way) *always* has eschatological significance, although I accept that the meaning of the original Hebrew phrase must always be determined in context.

[9]Jer. 7:32; 9:25 (24 LXX); 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 30 (37 LXX):3; 31 (38 LXX):27, 31, 38; 48 (31 LXX):12; 49 (30 LXX):2; 51 (28 LXX):52.

[10]Whether or not one chooses to define the term 'eschatological' in such a way that it applies to Jeremiah itself, these texts certainly fit any normal definition of the word in terms of the way our author would have understood the prophet. Jer. 23:5, for example, one of the 'days are coming' passages, speaks of God raising up to David a 'ἀνατολὴν δικαίαν' who will reign and perform judgement and righteousness upon the land (if the author knew Philo, cf. *Conf.* 62-63). Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* 10, has

As an expression of eschatology, the 'last days' phrase relates to the covenant language which the author will use later in the epistle. Whereas the discussion in the central portion of Hebrews will deal with *cultic* themes, the exordium implicitly relates the covenant scheme to *revelatory* motifs by its use of the expression, as we shall also see of the angels.[11] These diverse 'speakings' through the prophets were the way in which God revealed himself formerly to those who were within the old covenant, while his more recent agent of revelation is himself the mediator of a new covenant. Covenant language, therefore, is pertinent to the whole epistle and can be used to distinguish the two epochs of salvation history, as well as to delineate the contrasting elements between them. In particular, the Jeremiah citation in chapter 8 serves as a Scriptural basis for the claim that God has enacted a change for the better in the way in which he relates to his people, and the author accordingly places the quotation at the very centre of his argument.

The use of Jer. 31 in chapters 8-10, therefore, gives an authoritative basis for the distinction which the author has already made in the exordium and upon which, as we shall claim, he has built his argument in chapter 1. As a result, the use of Jeremiah in these chapters provides the best insight into how the author understands the phrase 'ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων' in 1:2. In chapter 8, the Jeremiah citation occurs in the middle of the author's central theological discourse on the high priesthood of Christ.[12] The author had already introduced the idea of the new covenant in 7:22 in conjunction with Christ's superiority over the Levitical priests. As a Melchizedekian priest whom God has 'sworn into office' and who continues in this role forever, Christ has become the pledge (ἔγγυος) of a better covenant. Chapter 8 expands upon this covenant motif and sets the stage for the argument in 9 and 10 which is to follow. The earthly priests serve 'the heavenly things' only 'by way of a shadowy illustration'

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noted the occurance of similar expressions in Sir. 48:24-25 and especially 4QFlor 1:15, where the Hebrew phrase occurs in a Messianic context.

[11]A distinction made by Vos, 'Hebrews, Epistle of the *Diathêkê*', *PTR* 14 (1916) 43, 52. I suspect strongly that a general divison of the earlier part of Hebrews structurally into revelation (1-4) and priesthood (5-10) stands behind Vos' treatment of the covenant motif and thus that of Lehne, since she is following him (*New Covenant* 94). Vos thus foreshadows in general our relation of the angels to the new covenant motif.

[12]I would place the boundaries of this section as 4:14-10:18, with 5:11-6:20 as a striking paraenetic interruption used to retain the attention of the audience (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.14.9: 'ἔτι τὸ προσεκτικοὺς ποιεῖν πάντων τῶν μερῶν κοινόν ... πανταχοῦ γὰρ ἀνιῶσι μᾶλλον ἢ ἀρχόμενοι'). This is similar in some ways to the analysis of W. Nauck, 'Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes', *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, BZNW 26 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelman, 1960) 203-4; and that of G. H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, SNT 73 (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 79-82; 102-3; although Nauck places the end of the unit at 10:31, and Guthrie leaves these boundaries somewhat fluid.

(8:5),[13] while Christ, in contrast, 'has obtained a superior ministry, in as much as he is also mediator of a new covenant, which has been put into effect on the basis of better promises' (8:6). Here one sees the close connection in Hebrews between cult, covenant, and Law, as well as promise, a complex of ideas to which we will later return.[14]

In this context, therefore, the citation from Jeremiah provides divine authentication of the author's argument, demonstrating that the first covenant was not 'ἄμεμπτος' (8:7) and that God[15] 'found fault' (μέμφομαι) with its recipients. In 'coming days', God will establish a new covenant, different from the previous one, because the *fathers* did not remain faithful to the former one (8:9). 'After those days', God will write his laws upon the very minds and hearts of his people, making it so that they need not teach one another to know him (8:10-11). God will be merciful toward their iniquities and no longer remember their sins (8:12). Finally, after citing this passage, the author concludes by noting that when God has called this covenant a 'new' one, he has implicitly declared the former one 'old'. So the one which is old and aging (τὸ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον) is about to vanish (ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ — 8:13).

There are several points of interest in regard to the author's citation of these verses. First of all, we noted in chapter 1[16] that extreme caution must be taken with regard to citations, for not every aspect of a quotation may be significant to an author. We have already noted that the author seems to have a sense that the new covenant was always a part of God's plan rather than some *ad hoc* solution to a scheme gone wrong. Rather, as we shall see below, the main reason for using this citation appears in the author's recapitulation in 10:16-17.[17]

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[13]For a justification of this translation of 'ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ', see chapter 4, pp. 113-14 and chapter 5, pp. 165-66, as well as L. Hurst's article, 'How "Platonic" Are Heb. viii.5 and ix.23f?', *JTS* 34 (1983) 156-168.

[14]Susanne Lehne, *New Covenant* 26, in particular has drawn attention to the interrelatedness of these concepts, claiming both that 'the author subsumes the Law under the rubric of cult' and that in Hebrews 'the Law ultimately becomes synonymous with the old covenant' (23f, following M. R. D'Angelo, *Moses in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SBLDS 42 [Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979] 243-46). Indeed, here Christ's high priestly service does seem to be identified with his mediation of a new covenant, which is spoken of in legal terms (νενομοθέτηται) and related to God's promises (Lehne, *New Covenant* 26f.). These are of course the corresponding uses of these concepts in relation to the new covenant rather than the old, but they serve to illustrate the general truth of Lehne's claims.

[15]The actual subject of this sentence is unclear. Christ is the immediate antecedent, but the context would seem to require God or the Holy Spirit, as is confirmed by the author's summary of the quote in 10:15, where it is the Holy Spirit who is said to witness this.

[16]See chapter 1, p. 29.

[17]H. Attridge, 'The Uses of Antithesis in Hebrews 8-10', *HTR* 79 (1986) 6, has also implied a summarising function to the recapitulation when he notes that one of the functions of the Jeremiah

Secondly, because the author has modified the 'last days' phrase in 1:2 with the adjective 'these', the author identifies the 'speaking' of God through a Son with the 'coming days' and 'after those days' of the Jeremiah passage. As chapters 8-10 make clear, the promises of forgiveness and a 'clean conscience' (which is arguably what the author understands by God writing his laws on his people's hearts) are already realities for those who hold fast their confession of faith. In fact, these promises (in addition to the author's general polemic in favour of the new covenant) seem to be the main points which the author wished to bring out of the Jeremiah quotation, as can be seen from his recapitulation of it in 10:16-17:

> But as for this covenant which I will make with them,
> after those days, says the Lord:
> I will put my laws in their hearts
> and I will write them upon their mind,
> and their sins
> and their transgressions will I remember no more.[18]

That the author considers these promises a present reality for the people of God is evident from the verses which follow (10:19f), which serve both as the hortatory conclusion of the preceding exposition and the beginning of a new paraenesis.[19] Here, the recipients are encouraged to have boldness to enter the holy of holies (10:19) and to approach God 'with a true heart' which *has been* purified from a wicked 'conscience' (10:22). Clearly the people of God already enjoy these benefits of the new covenant.

While the new covenant may be a present reality, an equally important aspect of the author's treatment of the Jeremiah quotation, however, is the fact that the author cannot say that the new has arrived without reservation. Rather,

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citation is 'to indicate what are the "better promises" (8:6) on which the new covenant is based. These promises are implicit in the two verses of the citation from Jeremiah which are repeated at 10:16-17', namely, that the covenant is an 'interior affair' and that sin will be effectively forgiven.

[18]There are a few changes here from his earlier citation, apart from its abridgement: 1) he substitutes 'with them' for the 'house of Israel', possibly because 'the new covenant is of more universal scope' (so Attridge, *Hebrews* 281), 2) he switches the objects of giving and writing, 3) he inserts 'ἀνομιῶν' in parallel to ἁμαρτιῶν, and 4) he changes the aorist subjunctive 'μνησθῶ' to a future indicative 'μνησθήσομαι,' perhaps to make the promise 'more vivid and emphatic' (Attridge, *Hebrews* 281). It should be noted that all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[19]As I have already mentioned (above, n. 12), although I would place the structural division break after 10:18 due to the change in genre, I affirm the continuity in content between 10:19f. and the preceding. The preceding exposition is not complete without the hortatory conclusion, and the exhortation is not complete without the preceding argumentation. G. Guthrie, *Structure* 103-4, has made a similar claim, terming this unit an 'overlapping constituent' belonging both to what begins and follows.

he says that the old is just that — old, and 'ἐγγύς' to its disappearance. He does not say, therefore, that the old has completely vanished. Herein lies the main complexity of the plot and eschatology of Hebrews. In his exposition, the author clearly wishes his recipients to rely upon the finality and presence of the new covenant, but his paraenesis clearly reflects the element of expectation and of that which has not completely disappeared. The phrase 'in these last days', therefore, takes on a dual sense in the epistle. In the context of Jeremiah and the new covenant, the coming days are here, and that which they have accomplished is present; but the people of God are still in the 'last days' of the old, which has not completely disappeared.

In the eschatological scheme of the author, therefore, there are two broad epochs of salvation history, with two corresponding covenants. In relation to the plotline of the story as a whole, however, these two ages overlap to some extent. The very situation which gives rise to the epistle results from the fact that the recipients live in the overlap of the two periods. On the one hand, Christ has come, and the new age and its covenant have begun, granting present access to God and forgiveness for sins. In this sense, the old covenant has effectively ended, implying that the recipients should no longer depend upon the antiquated cultus with its Levitical priests. In the visible realm, however, the world has not yet seen the full effects of the change. As we shall repeatedly see, this understanding of a salvation history which is divided into two epochs with two contrasting covenants underlies the whole of the author's thought, whether it is expressed explicitly or is left implicit.

III. *The Mediators of the Former Covenant*

As we have already indicated, the contrast between the old and new age is not restricted to the central chapters of Hebrews; it also relates to the author's argument in the catena of chapter one. Commentators have not always fully appreciated the fact that the division of salvation history into an old and new covenant is an important factor in the author's contrast of the Son with the angels.[20] The author finds such a contrast relevant to his discussion in part because he associates the angels with the ministration of the old covenant, while Christ as enthroned Son inaugurates the new. The Law is thus the 'the word

[20]Guthrie, *Structure* 121f, for example, sees chapter 1 as the Son's pre-existent superiority over the angels, which is then followed in chapter 2 by the Son becoming lower than the angels. This line of interpretation misses the author's point, which is to show that the Christ who was lower than the angels for a little while (2:9) is now exalted above the angels and is the mediator of a new covenant greater than the one for which they were responsible.

spoken through angels' (2:2), and the angels are 'ministering spirits sent for service on account of those about to inherit salvation' (1:14). The angels are hereby connected with the old covenant and with service in this world. They will presumably have different functions in the heavenly assembly (12:22), in the 'world which is coming', which will not be subjected to them (2:5), but rather to the 'seed of Abraham', whom God is leading to glory through Christ (2:16). These verses indicate that the author views the angel/Son contrast in chapter one primarily from an eschatological perspective, even if he does not bring this aspect of the contrast to the fore. The angels revealed the old covenant (they 'spoke' it; 2:2), while the Son is the revelatory agent and effector of the new.

While Christ and the angels contrast in the author's thinking in general as the revealers of two different covenants, the author finds a contrast between them rhetorically effective for the beginning of his homily in the light of his understanding of Ps. 8. Although Christ was 'lower than the angels for a little while' in his earthly life (2:9), he is now the enthroned Son at the right hand of God, the mediator of a new covenant better than the one spoken through the angels. Although it is not always recognised, language about the Son in chapter 1 is primarily focused on his 'enthronement' as royal Son at the point of his exaltation.[21] The contrast of Christ with the angels in chapter one, therefore, is an appropriate introduction to the homily, announcing the exalted status which Christ has now achieved in fulfilment of his salvific destiny. If we are correct to see Christ's high priesthood in part as a metaphorical restatement of this exaltation, then the appropriateness of this as an introduction becomes even more apparent.[22]

This locus of Sonship in chapter one is borne out throughout chapter one. As Bertold Klappert has written, 'Ps 2,7 eröffnet und Ps 110:1 schließt diese Schilderung des Inthronisationsaktes sinnvoll ab.'[23] Even in the context of Hebrews 1:1-4, the main clause of this long, periodic sentence is the statement that the Son has spoken in these last days (1:2, placing the Son in the new age in contrast to former days). In addition, the main verb of the relative clause in verse 3 places the locus of its exalted descriptions at the point of Christ's session at the right hand of Majesty. These observations tend toward the conclusion

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[21]See the previous footnote.

[22]See below, 'Christ's high priesthood as a metaphor', pp. 74-83.

[23]*Die Eschatologie des Hebräerbriefs* (Munich: Kaiser, 1969) 22. I have argued elsewhere that language of enthronement pervades this chapter, even when the wording alludes in some way to the pre-existence of Christ (in a paper presented at the S.B.L. Hebrews and General Epistles Group [1995] entitled, 'Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in the Epistle to the Hebrews').

that Christ is most truly the ἀπαύγασμα of God's glory with the All under his feet after he has ascended to God's right hand and thus as the mediator of the new covenant. In more than any other way, it is Christ as the embodiment of God's wisdom for humanity in redemption who is the wisdom of God, making it possible for the author to speak of him as God's agent in creation.[24]

Similarly, it is in this exalted state that Christ has *become* better than the angels (1:4), assuming the role of royal Son, a name which the angels do not have (1:5). The very first mention of the angels in 1:4 is thus clearly in the context of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God as he in his glory is no longer 'lower than' them. There are several associations which the author will bring into play in connection with this exaltation of Christ, one of which is the attainment of glory and honour in fulfilment of Psalm 8.[25] As we have already implied, it is this psalm along with the tradition associating the deliverance of the Law with angels which gives rise to the contrast in chapter one.[26] When this psalm is read Christologically, it seems clear that whenever the Christ is crowned with glory and honour, he must become better than the angels. The fact that Christ was lower than the angels in his earthly life thus argues for a post-exaltation context for chapter one.

Whenever it may be that God leads this firstborn into the world (1:6), therefore, it is certainly at a point when the angels must give way in worship to the one who is now to be exalted above them and whose 'covenant' supercedes the one which they revealed. The meaning of this verse is highly debated, hinging on what one considers the οἰκουμένη to be, as well as how one takes πάλιν. On the one hand, this entrance cannot be the birth of Christ, because that occurred during the time when he was 'a little lower than the angels'.[27] If

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[24]This sentiment seems best expressed in Hebrews 2:10, where it is said that 'it was fitting for him, because of whom the All exists and through whom the All exists, to perfect the leader of their [humanity's] salvation through sufferings while leading many sons to glory.' God is here the one 'through whom' everything exists, in distinction from Jesus, who is the one God perfected through sufferings. One seems forced to the conclusion, therefore, that the pre-existent Christ as creator exists in some way within God. The leading of many sons to glory takes place in the 'fitting' wisdom of God, which he accomplishes through the perfection of Jesus. Christ thus embodies God's wisdom in his governance of 'the All' when in the 'consummation of the ages' (9:26) he initiates a new covenant based upon better promises (8:6).

[25]See below in chapter 3, p. 86-92.

[26]So Caird, 'Method' 49 and Hurst, 'Christology' 154ff.

[27]Unless of course I am not heeding my own advice on the incorporation of traditions and/or the use of a slightly figurative statement. I think, however, that this reading fits in best with the context. I therefore disagree with C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 17; H. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: A & C Black, 1964) 45; and Attridge, *Hebrews* 55, all of whom believe this verse to be such an allusion.

the birth of Christ be excluded, the verse either refers to his second coming[28] or relates directly to the use of οἰκουμένη in 2:5, implying that the entrance is in fact the exaltation of Christ to God's right hand.[29] Our interpretation of chapter one favours this last reading the most. The angels must worship Christ as he enters into heaven as the exalted Son. In keeping with our method, however, we must be careful not to stake our claims too heavily on such a highly debated passage. There are also good arguments for understanding 1:6 as a reference to the parousia.[30] In all three interpretations, however, the entrance relates either to the approach, inauguration, or full arrival of the new age in contrast to the former one.

The citations in 1:7-12 might seem on first glance to relate more generally to Christ and the angels rather than to his exaltation in particular. We would claim, nevertheless, that their primary focus is on the relative permanence of Christ's now realised kingship in contrast to that of the angels and their now passing role. The author still has the enthroned Christ in view. This Son has been anointed and enthroned for eternity by God in the presence of his companions (the other sons? the angels? 1:9) and the years of his reign will

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[28]B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1892) 37; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 13th ed., MeyerK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984 [1936] 113; E. Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. by R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg (Minneapolis. Augsburg, 1984 [1939]) 98-101; J. Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 1970 [1954]) 9; F. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger*, BU 4 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1968) 51; and H. Braun, *An die Hebräer*, HNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1984) 37.

[29]F. J. Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbreifes* (Munich: Zink, 1955); A. Vanhoye, 'L'οἰκουμένη dans l'Épître aux Hébreux', *Bib* 45 (1964) 248-53; G. Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief*, SNT 2 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1969) 122; P. Andriessen, 'La teneur judéo-chrétienne de Hé I6 et II 14B-III2', *NovT* 18 (1976) 293-304; W. R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes*, WMANT 53 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1981) 23-25; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982) 214 n. 19; J. P. Meier, 'Symmetry and Theology in the Old Testament Citations of Heb 1,5-14', *Bib* 66 (1985) 507f.; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* 27; and P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 117. All of these would view the location of πάλιν in terms of the postpositive δέ, as did those who saw the verse as a reference to the entrance of Christ into the world at his birth.

[30]The position of πάλιν within the temporal clause and immediately preceeding εἰσαγάγῃ could be used to argue that this is Christ's second entrance at the time of the parousia. The author may be drawing from the Song of Moses in a form used by the early church. See the discussion in S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Soest, 1963) 20-23. Although the LXX of Deuteronomy 32:43 diverges slightly from the quotation here, the Odes following the Greek psalter render the verse almost exactly the same as Hebrews (only without the article on ἄγγελοι) and may represent a form used in Christian worship. Such an allusion fits well into a parousia context, where the ambiguous 'αὐτῷ' might be taken of Christ, who then comes to repay 'δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς', a motif which would relate to the putting of Christ's enemies under his feet (e.g. 10:13).

never come to an end (1:12). The angels, on the other hand, are servants (1:14) whose ministry to humanity will end with the termination of the first age and is transitional, as indicated by their comparison with winds and flames (1:7). We will defend this interpretation of the verse further in chapter 4.[31]

The chain of citations then ends as we have claimed it began, with a reference to the exaltation of Christ to God's right hand in enthronement, with Christ now higher than the angels in his glory and honour. The angels have never achieved such a status. 'God's word' has never entailed such a role for the angels (1:13a). The appointed place of angels in the order of things with regard to humanity was as ministers while the people of God wait for salvation (1:14). When the salvation will come, however, the angels will clearly no longer be able to function in such a role and presumably even the other sons will be greater than they in fulfilment of the psalm.

There does not seem to be any need, therefore, to posit that chapter one is a polemic against some kind of angel Christology or veneration in the community for which the epistle was intended, although it is certainly possible that angels may have played a significant role in the thought of the community addressed.[32] Rather, the author includes this contrast 1) because of the inference to be drawn from Ps. 8 that Christ's exaltation placed him higher than the angels in the fulfilment of humanity's intended glory and 2) because of the relationship between the angels and the Law and, thus, between the angels and the old covenant about which the author will spend the greater part of his exposition arguing.[33] Chapter one, while not focusing directly on this eschatological contrast, presupposes it, for it has only the exalted Christ in view. The author can thus lead naturally into an exhortation based on the covenant distinction in 2:1-4.[34]

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[31]See chapter 4, p. 123-24.

[32]R. G. Hammerton-Kelly, for example, suggested that 'the author found it necessary to combat an "angel Christology"', *Pre-existence Wisdom & the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-existence in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973) 244. L. Stuckenbruck gives a full delineation and evaluation of the suggested reasons for the contrast between Son and angels in *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995) 124-39, concluding that there may have been a polemical source behind Heb. 1-2 (137) which the author takes over 'to sharpen his readers' perception of the message given through Christ' (139). I am not convinced, however, that such is a necessary conclusion.

[33]See Hurst, *Background* 45, 78.

[34]Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration* 128, argues that there is a 'certain logical distance between the argument of Christ's superiority over angels' in chapter 1 and 'accountability to the new covenant' in the exhortation of 2:1-4 (128), thereby precluding that the latter is a basis for the former. As I have just mentioned, however, this 'logical distance' is simply a shift in focus from Christ as the now enthroned one in a contrast which *presupposes* the eschatological contrast between old and new, to the difference between the work of Christ and the work of the angels *explicitly* contrasted in the following verses.

In the story world of salvation history, the angels were the closest equivalent to Christ in the old covenant, the 'patrons' of the old age. Not only were they the ones through whom the Law was delivered (2:2), thus contrasting with Christ in that way,[35] but they also may have been considered in some way as 'guardians' of the kind of ceremonial purity and ritual cleansing which the author associated with the Law.[36] The angels were only temporary stewards of humanity under the old covenant, which was a mere foreshadowing of the permanent covenant God was going to make with humanity through Christ. In every way, the mediator of the new covenant is superior and more lasting than those who delivered the previous 'word' (2:2).

The distinction between the angels and Christ, therefore, would seem to presuppose the fundamental eschatological contrast between the covenants, at least in part a contrast of revelation, mediation, and governance.[37] Once one has noted the connections which can be made between chapter one and new covenant language and once one accepts that Christ and the angels are the 'revealers' of their respective covenants, one begins to see how Nissalä and Übelacker could consider 1:5-2:18 as a *narratio* presenting the basic picture for the argument which is to follow.[38] In our opinion, chapter one serves as a rhetorically effective introduction to the cornerstone of the author's Christology and argumentation: Christ is the now exalted Son, the one who has caused a final, eschatological shift in the relationship between God and humanity. The first two chapters, therefore, constitute a rhetorically effective, though not summary, overview and introduction to who Christ is and what he has done, using more traditional language than the following chapters, which will reformulate this language through the metaphor of high priesthood.

There is a shift, but it does not preclude our understanding. As we have already mentioned, chapter one is a rhetorically effective presentation of the exalted Christ in his new role, a role which will form one of the principal bases of argumentation throughout the epistle.

[35]Cf. also Gal. 3:19.

[36]As in 9:10. Such an association with ritual and ceremonial purity may underlie such cryptic and allusive comments as 1 Cor. 11:10 and statements in Qumran such as are found in CD 15.17, 1QSa 2:8-9, 1QM 7:6. I have considered this possibility in the light of a seminar delivered by L. Stuckenbruck at the University of Durham, Winter 1995. He raised the possibility that angels might in some way have been considered the guardians of proper order within worshipping communities.

[37]This contrast could be considered a spatial contrast, particularly if the angels were to be associated with an οἰκουμένη in the *earthly* realm in 1:6 and could therefore be associated cosmologically with the earthly realm and its transience. It should be noted, however, that the angels are present in the heavenly assembly (12:22), and we prefer a reading of οἰκουμένη which refers to the heavenly world of 2:5.

[38]See above, notes 4 and 5. This point, of course, is not essential to my argument.

Within the plot of salvation history, therefore, angels are present throughout the whole story. Their principal function within the author's story world, however, is in association with the former age, the first part of the plot. They, like the prophets, served to reveal God's 'word' to his people. Unlike the prophets, however, they revealed the Law, which was a valid revelation intended to point toward the coming new covenant in which Christ would reveal God's will. Although their function as ministers to those about to inherit salvation seems to continue into the 'today' of the present, it will end when the old age finally vanishes.

IV. *The Mediator of the New Covenant*

The principal function of covenant language seems to be to contrast the Law and its cultus with the one time offering of Christ. To understand more specifically what the author is getting at in this discussion, it is necessary to examine in greater detail how he actually relates the 'high priesthood' of Christ, which he places at the centre of the new covenant, to the cultus of the old covenant and its Law. When the author speaks of the high priesthood of the earthly priests or of the covenant inaugurated by Moses, he uses these terms in their normal sense (cf. 8:4). When he speaks of Christ as a high priest, however, who ministers in a heavenly tabernacle as a mediator of a new covenant, he uses these words in a new way, in an unusual sense, a *metaphorical* sense.[39]

History decisively demonstrates that the *customary* referents of terms such as 'sacrifice', 'high priest', and 'offering' were these entities as elements of the earthly cultus.[40] When one thus refers to capital punishment on a cross as a cultic sacrifice or to Christ's ascension to heaven as an entrance into a heavenly holy of holies, one gives these words a 'new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution', which is the definition of a metaphor.[41] To speak of

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[39]When I say that the author is using a metaphor when he speaks of Christ as high priest, I do not of course imply that the realities to which he refers are untrue or even necessarily that the author thought that he was using this language in anything other than its truest sense.

[40]Although the idea of a heavenly tabernacle certainly predates the epistle, the way in which the author connects traditional language about Christ to this idea is in any case a new way of speaking of these events and is thus metaphorical.

[41]So P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. by K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984) ix. See also chapter 3 of *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Christian University, 1976) 45-70; and chapter 3 of *The Rule of Metaphor* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 [Fr. 1975]) 65-100.

Christ as a high priest is thus *by definition* to speak metaphorically of Christ's work on the basis of a comparison with the earthly cultus.

This is not to say that there were not precedents for this metaphor. As we will note in our final conclusion to the dissertation, Paul clearly knows of an early Christian tradition which viewed Christ's death as a sacrifice offered by God.[42] More ambiguously, Rom. 8:34 speaks of Christ as an intercessor on our behalf at the right hand of God, which could indicate that early Christian thought had already begun to formulate a metaphor of high priesthood on the basis of Ps. 110.[43] Hebrews is nevertheless the only New Testament example of of this traditional metaphor which develops it not only in Day of Atonement terms with Christ as a sacrifice,[44] but also with Christ as the high priest who offers himself. He becomes both the offering and the offerer. While one cannot be absolutely certain that the author himself is responsible for this extension of the metaphor, there would not seem to be significant evidence to the contrary.[45]

If the author is largely responsible for the choice and development of this metaphor, then the question of purpose comes to mind. We have briefly argued in chapter 1 that the author is addressing a real situation which he perceives among his audience.[46] This fact implies that the author's development of the metaphor as the main point of his argumentation[47] is thought to be relevant in some way or persuasive with regard to the needs of the recipients of the epistle. We would contend that the author's use of the high priestly motif is used in order to contrast Christ directly with the entirety of the old covenant including the Levitical cultus. By choosing this metaphor, the author was enabled to

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[42]See Conclusion 2, p. 208.

[43]Whether 8:34 is in fact such an indication, however, is extremely unclear. J. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993) 533 does not think so, and J. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word (Dallas: Word: 1988) 504, suggests that other traditions could explain the datum, such as Paul's last Adam Christology, similar to *T.Abr.* 11.

[44]Attridge, *Hebrews* 146-47, makes this distinction between what he considers the traditional high priestly tradition as found in Rom. 8:34 and Hebrews' Yom Kippur development of the motif. It is not certain, as we noted in the previous footnote, that Rom. 8:34 is speaking of Christ as a high priest.

[45]I agree with the arguments of G. Cockerill, 'Heb. 1:1-14, *1 Clem.* 36:1-6 and the High Priest Title', *JBL* 97 (1978) 437-40, that 1 Clement is dependent upon Hebrews rather than there being a common tradition upon which both draw. Once this proposal is rejected, Rom. 8:34 would seem to be the only evidence for prior tradition concerning Christ as a high priest (cf., however, the arguments of Attridge, *Hebrews* 97-103). We would contend that the confession of Hebrews refers to Jesus' sonship rather than to his high priesthood (4:14; 10:23). Regardless of the position one takes on these issues, however, the author is sufficiently original in his development of the motif and the priestly nuance is sufficiently new to consider the motif a 'live' metaphor in terms of the author's use of it.

[46]See chapter 1, pp. 43-44, n. 117-119.

[47]Cf. 8:1.

argue that Christ has replaced the entire Law with its rituals and sanctuary. If this is the case, it becomes necessary to understand how the author relates the work of Christ to this old cultus and covenant before one can fully understand what the author is getting at by speaking of Christ as a high priest in the new covenant, since the meaning of the latter is defined by the former. Our study will proceed, therefore, by examining the author's use of νόμος and his utilisation of cultic imagery before returning to summarise how high priestly language functions in terms of the new age and its covenant.

A. Νόμος in Hebrews

The first occurrence of the word νόμος in Hebrews is in 7:5, although it is alluded to as early as 2:2, where the 'word' spoken through angels is contrasted with the salvation which was first spoken of by the Lord. The fact that the author speaks there of 'παράβασις' and 'παρακοή', as well as 'μισθαποδοσία', demonstrates that for the author, the Law functions to identify what sin is and what is to be punished, in addition to making prescriptions for the Levitical sacrificial system, which foreshadows sin's later 'atonement' through Christ (cf. also 10:28 and 12:18-21). Nevertheless, the principal concern of the author so far as the Law is concerned is its sacrificial system and its priests.

7:11 notes that the people of God were given the law (νενομοθέτηται) on the basis of the Levitical priesthood (ἐπ' αὐτῆς). There thus exists an intrinsic relationship between the two such that if this priesthood should be changed, the Law must also be changed as well (7:12). This statement is very significant for apprehending the author's thought, for it indicates that whatever the Law might be for the author, it contains in its essence the Levitical priesthood. Remove the cultus, and the Law ceases to exist. They cannot be materially differentiated.

The author uses this inextricable connection to prepare his audience for his point. The change in priesthood has occurred. The former commandment (of sacrifice), that is, the Law, has been nullified because of its weakness (7:18, 28) and inability to perfect those who depend upon it (7:19). The author can support this claim *via* Ps. 110:4 and God's appointment of a royal priest after the order of Melchizedek. This order is superior because it is constituted by a priest who does not have an end to his life (7:3), who 'lives' (7:8) by the power of an 'indestructible life' (7:16), always 'living to intercede' for his people (7:25). The earthly priests, on the other hand, could not offer such an eternal service because they were always hindered by death (7:23). One begins to sense how important Christ's victory over the one having the power of death (2:14) is for the epistle's soteriology. This victory seems to be the main content to what

the author understands by a Melchizedekian priesthood. This priesthood, therefore, serves as a metaphor for more traditional Christian language in a way which allows the author to contrast Christ directly with the Law and Levitical cultus.

10:9 states in stark terms that Christ in fact 'took away' the sacrifices which were offered according to the Law (10:8) when he obeyed the will of God by offering his own body. The Law, therefore, belongs squarely to the old covenant and has been cancelled along with the Levitical cult which stands as its foundation and with which it is virtually interchangeable.[48] Neither of these two should play a role any longer in the life of the people of God. They are truly past, as is seen by the author's concluding exhortation in 13:9-16, where the author denies the efficacy and relevance of the Levitical altar and its sacrifices to the recipients of the letter, exhorting them to go 'outside the camp' (13:13) to Jesus instead.[49]

The Law in Hebrews, therefore, is virtually synonymous with the Levitical cultus, upon which it is constituted. Whatever applies to the cultus also applies to the Law in general. We can thus proceed immediately to our discussion of chapters 9 and 10. The final section of this chapter will pursue further the question of in what way the language of Christ's high priesthood is metaphorical.

B. The Levitical cultus of the old covenant

The author defends his view of the Law in more detail in the argumentation of chapters 9 and 10, which follow directly upon the Jeremiah citation and the author's claim in 8:13 that the old is obsolete and about to vanish. Here, the author is contrasting the first covenant (i.e. the Law and its cultic prescriptions) with the new one in terms of the wilderness tabernacle and Old Testament

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[48]I would reverse Lehne's comment and say that Hebrews subsumes the cult under the rubric of Law, but in such a way that the Levitical cult is the very substance and foundation of the Law, and thus that the two become almost synonymous in the author's argument.

[49]The exact nature of that to which the author is referring here is hotly debated, with answers varying from Jewish dietary laws (most patristic commentators [so Attridge, *Hebrews* 394 n.62]) to participation in pagan cultic meals (Moffatt *The Epistle to the Hebrews* , ICC [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1924] 233). Another suggestion is that there is a reference here to Jewish synagogue meals of some sort (cf. J. Thurén, *Das Lobopfer der Hebräer: Studien zum Aufbau und Anliegen von Hebräerbrief 13* [Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1973] 186ff), perhaps in relation to a group torn between connections with the synogogue over and against their Christian associations. For a different thesis, see B. Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991) 10f. Knowledge of the exact situation is not in any case essential to my argument. The author clearly uses the imagery of the Levitical sacrificial system to make his point, and its proper function he regards as already past. See Conclusion 2, p. 216-18.

sacrificial rituals. In this, 9:1-10 (9:1 — μέν) contrasts the Old Testament tabernacle and its sacrifices in general with that which Christ has effected in 9:11-15 (9:11 — δέ).[50] We need not be too concerned with the problems of the author's placement of objects in the tabernacle at this time.[51] What is significant for the eschatology of the epistle is the author's unique division of the tabernacle into two different tents.

At first, the author sets out the basic scheme of service in the two parts of the tabernacle, providing the basis for his argumentation (9:6, 7). The priests are said to go into the first tent *throughout the year* (διὰ παντὸς εἰσίασιν), while *only* the high priest entered the holy of holies *once* (ἅπαξ) in the year to offer blood for the unintentional sins of the people.[52] The author then concludes that the Holy Spirit is demonstrating by this that 'the way of the holy of holies has not yet been manifested while the first tent still has standing' (9:8). In its immediate context, it is not exactly clear in what way 9:8 follows upon the preceding contrast. In what way does the contrast between frequency of entrance and one time entrance relate to the way into the holy of the holies not yet having appeared? In addition, how does the existence of the 'first tent' impede such entrance? For that matter, to what does the author refer by the 'first tent' anyway?

The most natural way of taking the phrase 'first tent' here seems to be in continuity with its preceding context, which is clearly the distinction between the first and second parts of the wilderness tabernacle. B. F. Westcott noted that it is difficult here to suppose that the author has suddenly changed the referent of 'first tent' from the immediately preceding verse.[53] In addition, this provides some explanation of how the first tent could be figuratively considered

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[50]So J. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981) 105; and N.H. Young, 'The Gospel According to Hebrews 9,' *NTS* 27 (1981) 206; *pace* G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions*, AB 36 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972) 139f, who argues that the intervening distance and the inclusion of another μέν ... δέ construction (9:6-7) preclude such an interpretation. A semantic consideration of the units, however, demonstrates that they do in fact form contrasting units.

The exact ending point of the second section is not essential to my argument. It is possible that the second unit ends at verse 14 (the consensus), although I continue it until verse 15 because 1) this makes the contrast between the first covenant in 9:1 explicit with the reappearance of the term 'διαθήκη' in verse 15 and 2) because this makes clearer the shift in focus at verse 16 to the inaugurations of the two covenants.

[51]For an interesting speculation as to the rise of traditions of interpretation which might stand behind the arrangement of the objects, cf. Attridge, *Hebrews* 236-38.

[52]For a discussion of whether Hebrews envisages two types of sins, see H. Löhr *Umkehr und Sünde im Hebräerbrief*, BZNW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994) 22ff.

[53]*Hebrews* 252.

a barrier to the holy of holies — because it is; that is, one has to go through it to get to the holy of holies. There is also a prohibition on who can enter this inner sanctum, since *only* the high priest is allowed to enter it (9:7). This suggests that the author may also allude to other claims he makes in the epistle as a whole, such as the fact that the high priest of the new covenant is a 'leader' (12:2) and 'brother' to the other 'priests' (2:11 — cf. 13:15) and provides for them present access to the holy of holies (10:19). A contrast of exclusion/inclusion, therefore, may very well be implicit in 9:8 and explain the transition in part. The way into the holy of holies has not yet been made apparent while the first tent exists.

Lincoln Hurst, however, has attempted to argue the possibility that the 'first tent' here is a reference to the whole tabernacle[54] on the basis of supposed ambiguities in 1) the use of πρῶτος in chapter 9,[55] and 2) the phrase 'present time' in 9:9. It is questionable, however, whether the author is as ambiguous as Hurst believes him to be in his use of πρῶτος in chapter 9. 9:1 clearly refers primarily to the first *covenant*, given that 'τὴν πρώτην' in 8:13 is obviously modifying an understood 'διαθήκην.'[56] 9:2 makes a clear shift to the distinguishing of the tents of the tabernacle, which we have already noted occurs in the verse immediately preceding 9:8. Unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, it seems most logical to presume that this continues to be the case until 9:15, where the author specifies that he is once again using the term in relation to the first *covenant*.

If the train of thought is complex when the 'first tent' is taken to refer to the outer part of the tabernacle, it becomes even more difficult in Hurst's reading. In what way does the preceding explanation of ministry in the earthly tabernacle demonstrate that the way into the holy of holies will not appear until the whole tabernacle is gone? In our explanation this analogy makes perfect sense. The author consistently makes a distinction between the 'once for all' sacrifice of Christ and the multiplicity of sacrifices of the old covenant (e.g. 9:25; 10:1,10,11-12,14), so the two parts of the tabernacle as the author has explained

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[54]*Hebrews* 26-27, following in general J. Moffatt, *Hebrews* 117-18; A. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspectives* (Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960) 147-48; Bruce, *Hebrews* 194-95; and Héring, *Hebrews* 183. For further discussion, see chapter 5, pp. 147f.

[55]His argument at this point is similar to Héring, who notes the facility with which the author 'manipulates expressions with various senses' (*Hebrews* 74).

[56]While it is conceivable that ἡ πρώτη in 9:1 could in some allegorical sense have a dual reference to both σκηνή and διαθήκη, such a suggestion seems a bit speculative. It is puzzling how Hurst (and Buchanan, *Hebrews* 139f) could miss this fact in the light not only of the antecedent, but also of the fact that if ἡ πρώτη referred to the first tent, then the first tent comes to have an 'earthly sanctuary' (9:1), which would be a rather non-sensical statement.

them in 9:6-7 provide a ready made analogy for the difference between Christ and the old covenant. Our reading in fact provides an explanation of the peculiar language of a first and second tent in the first place, language which becomes irrelevant in Hurst's construal. These factors begin to explain how 9:6-7 might relate to 9:8 in the author's mind.

The author's main point, however, shows up in 9:9, where the division of the tabernacle into a first and second tent is made into a temporal contrast which corresponds to the author's eschatology as expressed by the two covenants. The situation of multiplicity and singularity which corresponds to the first and second tent of the tabernacle is in fact an eschatological parable of the two epochs of salvation history, the first of which had continuously offered sacrifices in contrast to Christ's single offering, as we have seen. The grammar confirms this reading as 9:9 begins with the indefinite relative pronoun ἥτις, which most likely refers to the first tent of the tabernacle in 9:8.[57]

Hurst's conjecture that the 'present age' might refer to the time of Moses is not only unlikely on lexical grounds,[58] it misses the entire point which the author is making. The author is not speaking about the wilderness tabernacle out of some obscure historical interest, nor is it merely a gloss for the Jerusalem temple. It is representative of an age and of a covenant. The author has never lost sight of the first covenant from 9:1, and he bounds this very section with an inclusio formed between δικαιώματα in 9:1 and 9:10. This repetition of δικαιώματα in particular serves in 9:10 to demonstrate that the present age of fleshly ordinances is in fact the time of the old covenant, which now more than ever is 'about to vanish'. The 'present time' is thus the time of the 'last days' in regard to the old covenant, which is on the verge of its 'reformation' (9:10). Hurst's suggestion must yield to the pervasive eschatology of the epistle.

In this parable of 9:9,[59] therefore, in which the first tent represents the epoch of the old covenant, there are gifts and sacrifices being offered which are not

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[57]Although scholars such as H. Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 2nd ed., HNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931) 77; Michel, *Hebräer* 307; and Bruce, *Hebrews* 195ff, have claimed that it refers to the whole tabernacle. Young, 'Gospel' 201, has argued instead that such an interpretation would run counter to Hebrews' use of ἥτις elsewhere in the epistle, 'for the writer consistently refers back to a specific antecedent and the gender and number are modified accordingly.' He then mentions 2:3; 8:6; 9:2; 10:9[=10:8],11,35; and 12:5.

[58]Harold Attridge, *Hebrews* 241 n. 133, has noted that the 'the expression is common for "the present"' in the contemporary literature, noting Polybius *Hist.* 1.60.9; Philo *Sacr. AC* 47; *Migr. Abr.* 43; Josephus *Ant.* 16.6.2, 162; and Sextus Empiricus *Pyrrh. Hyp.* 3.17.144, a fact noted of ἐνεστώς as early as Westcott (*Hebrews* 252).

[59]Now taking 'καθ' ἥν' to refer to 'παραβολή' which is the immediate antecedent. Young, 'Gospel' 201, sees καθ' ἥν as also refering to the first tent, which is certainly the basis for the parable, but this parable (9:9-10) applies to the whole sacrificial service of the old covenant, not just that performed in the outer tent.

actually able to perfect the worshipper, for they are only ordinances orientated toward the flesh (9:9-10). They have only been imposed 'μέχρι καιροῦ διορθώσεως' (9:10), which is the point at which the outer tent and its limitations on further entrance will cease to exist (9:8), and the people of God will be able to enter freely into the holy of holies.[60] This parable, therefore, corresponds exactly to what the author has already said in general about the Levitical cult in chapter 7. The Law simply was not capable of perfecting anything. Instead, God has introduced a 'better hope' of reaching God (7:19).

9:11-15 states exactly what that better hope is. Christ himself has now arrived as a high priest of good things 'γενομένων' (9:11). If this is the original reading of the verse, then the author points out clearly that the time of reformation about which he has been speaking is now here, a claim which we have already seen to be consistent with the author's thought in general.[61] The good promises which the Jeremiah quotation has brought to light, are now available, and there is no longer any need to rely upon the fleshly ordinances of the first covenant. Christ has not entered into the inner sanctum of the earthly sanctuary, nor has he used the blood of bulls and goats, but he has entered by means of his own blood into the true holy of holies (9:11-12). Almost every one of these expressions has an interpretative problem of some sort which we will eventually need to address, but for the moment it will suffice to note the eschatological significance of 9:13-14:

> For if the blood of he-goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer on those who have become unclean sanctifies to cleanse the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered himself blameless to God through the eternal spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works in order to serve the living God.

What is interesting here is the fact that the author has once again contrasted the multiplicity of the old covenant with the singularity of Christ. He has done this by combining cultic rituals from the Old Testament.[62] So, in addition to the goats and young bulls (τράγων καὶ μόσχων) of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:3)[63] which the author mentions in 9:12, he adds the ashes of a heifer from

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[60]As the author explicitly states, this is a parable, but cosmological overtones may also be present, a possibility which we will consider in chapter 4, p. 129 and chapter 5, pp. 147-54. See also our discussion in chapter 5 of the idiom 'ἐχεῖν στάσις'.

[61]The other reading, 'μελλόντων,' also has some strong manuscript support (e.g. ℵ), but the reading γενομένων seems to fit in even better with the author's eschatological scheme.

[62]So especially Young, 'Gospel' 205.

[63]The word for goat in Lev. 16:15 of the LXX is χίμαρος, although Attridge, *Hebrews* 248, and Michel, *Hebräer* 312, note that Aquila and Symmachus use τράγος. This would not be the only place

regulations for ritual purification (Num. 19), as well as the more generic 'bulls' (ταύρων).[64] This is similar to what the author will do more strikingly with the inauguration ritual in 9:19. The point the author is making yet again is that the whole of the old covenant cultic ritual is now past in the light of Christ. The Levitical cult contributed only to the cleansing of the *flesh*, while Christ's work is *spiritual* and cleanses the *conscience.*[65] Christ is thus the mediator of a better covenant, because his death has brought about an eternal redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant, which leads to the reception of the promise of an eternal inheritance (9:15). The author thus returns to his original covenant theme and completes the contrast begun in 9:1.[66]

9:15 provides a good transition to the next phase of the author's argument, which concerns the inauguration of the two different covenants.[67] This is because it concludes with reference to the 'eternal inheritance' which belongs to those who are called. 9:16 and 17 then play on this idea by shifting the meaning of the language momentarily to the idea of a 'will' or 'testament' (διαθήκη):

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where the author agrees with the LXX revisions, for the term θυμιατήριον is also used by Symmachus and Theodotion in their translation of Ex. 30:1 (Attridge, *Hebrews* 234).

[64]This term is never used in the LXX of the Pentateuch in a sacrificial context, although it does appear in such a connection significantly in Ps. 50 (49 LXX):13 (The author alludes to Ps. 50:14 in 13:15 and perhaps also to 50:5 in 9:17, as J.J. Hughes has posited in 'Hebrews IX 15ff. and Galatians III 15ff.: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure' *NovT* 21 [1979] 44) and Is. 1:11, both of which stand in the Old Testament 'anti-cultus' tradition!

[65]These are contrasts which we will look at in further detail in chapter 4, pp. 130-37.

[66]One interesting element of his contrast is his claim that this death provided redemption from the transgressions of the *first covenant*. This gives rise to several questions. Did the author believe that there was no atonement for sins in the second covenant, or are they of a completely different sort, so that there are two kinds of sin in accordance with two kinds of 'law' in the epistle? Although we would go far afield to go into such questions in depth, it is interesting to note that the author never claims that Christ's sacrifice applies to sins which might be committed after one has become a part of the second covenant. 10:26 implies that Christ's sacrifice does not apply in such a case. 9:15 could be an allusion to such a fact as a kind of warning. Nevertheless, the fact that one *can* sin at all after becoming a part of the second covenant implies that there is still such a thing as sin, as might be confirmed by the mention of 'laws' in the Jeremiah quotation (8:10 and 10:16) and the general ethical exhortations of chapter 13. 2:2, on the other hand, contrasts the transgressions of the first covenant with rejection of the salvation of Christ! This may imply that all sin in the second covenant can be subsumed under the category of rejection of Christ, a possibility we will briefly suggest in chapter 4, pp. 135-37. As we have argued, therefore, when the author speaks of the Law being abolished, he refers primarily to its cultic content (so also C.P. Anderson, 'Who Are the Heirs of the New Age in the Epistle to the Hebrews?', *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyr*, ed. by J. Marcus and M. L. Soards, JSNTSS 24 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1989] 268ff). Cf also Löhr, *Umkehr* 22-68, 148f).

[67]It has been noted by Young, 'Gospel' 205; and Hurst, 'Eschatology and "Platonism" in the Epistle to the Hebrews', SBLSP (1984) 65-66, that these verses treat the inauguration of the earthly and heavenly tents. Although we accept this notion, we also feel the force of the term 'καθαρίζω' in 9:23 (so Attridge, *Hebrews* 261) and are intrigued by Attridge's arguments that the heavenly cleansing has more to do with 'human interiority' and the cleansing of the human conscience than with a more literal interpretation (262). See below, chapter 5, pp. 167, 169.

'for with a will, it is necessary to bring the death of the testator, for a will is secure on the basis of the dead, since it is never in effect when the testator lives.' John Hughes has argued temptingly that διαθήκη cannot mean 'will' here,[68] claiming that such an interpretation does not fit syntactically, semantically, or in the light of the historical background. Indeed the sentence is odd in many ways, introducing a new sense to διαθήκη without significant warning, as well as in its use of 'φέρεσθαι'[69] and the plural 'νεκροῖς'. Hughes has also pointed out that wills in the Hellenistic world were not only valid while the testator lived, but also quite often were put into effect before his or her death.[70] Instead, he argues that Hebrews 9:16-7 find their proper sense against the background of ancient near eastern practice, where the death of the victim represented the death of the one making the covenant, and one invoked a curse upon oneself if the agreement was not kept.[71] He posits an allusion to Ps. 50 (49 LXX):5, which speaks of the righteous making a covenant with God on the basis of sacrifices (ἐπὶ θυσίαις).[72]

Hughes' argument is tempting, but it runs into difficulty with Hebrews' claim that it is necessary for the one making the covenant to die in order for it to be 'βεβαία'.[73] In order for Hughes' sense to prevail, one must presuppose that these words are being used in a rather extended sense and, morever, that the kind of covenant about which Hebrews has been speaking, one which only God can make (8:9), requires his death.[74] When one considers how a first century

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[68]'Hebrews and Galatians'. He is followed by Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 230-32, and Lehne, *New Covenant* 124 n.5.

[69]Bruce's claim that φέρω is a technical term for registration, which he backs up by a reference to *P.Oxy.* ii (London: 1899) 244, is somewhat dubious (*Hebrews* 207 n.101). The usual words for registration are compounds of γράφω (ἀπογράφω or ἀναγράφω), and *p*244 is about a *transfer* of cattle (which would need to be 'brought'), not to mention the fact that the text breaks off soon after φέρεσθαι, leaving its sense somewhat ambiguous. The author may thus only be speaking of the bringing of cattle from one place to another. Finally, the reading φέρεσθαι itself is conjectured, since two of its letters are missing and the others are all uncertain.

[70]'Hebrews and Galatians' 44 and 60f.

[71]'Hebrews and Galatians' 45f.

[72]'Hebrews and Galatians' 44.

[73]So also Attridge, *Hebrews* 256: 'Covenants or contracts, of whatever sort, simply do not require the death of one of the parties.' It is possible also that by 'βεβαία' the author does not so much envisage the validity of the will, for the usual word in the papyri here is 'κυρία' (so *passim P.Oxy.* iii [London, 1903] 489, 490,491,492,493, etc.). What the author may mean is that the will is not unchangeable and *fixed* until the testator is dead.

[74]This is all the more significant in light of the limited use of covenant terminology in Hebrews, using it only to refer to the old and new covenants. Although we agree with Lehne (*New Covenant* 17) that the patriarchal 'covenants' are present in Hebrews, *pace* E. Grässer, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen*, WUNT 35 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck] 1985) 96, it is significant that the author uses the word *promise*

Greek speaker would have likely heard these words, it seems virtually certain that such a person would have heard διαθήκη as 'will' and not in terms of ancient near eastern practice. Even Hughes admits that 'the author is using Hellenistic legal terminology to describe Semitic covenant practice',[75] so Hughes recognises that the sentence contains legal terms and has an undeniably Hellenistic 'feel' to it. In addition, Hebrews has just spoken of 'inheritance' in the previous verse, which inevitably would lead one in the direction of 'will' rather than toward ancient covenant practice. Finally, the concern of the author is clearly forgiveness (ἄφεσις — 9:22) and cleansing rather than covenant agreement, so Hughes' way of taking the verses also involves a shift in sense from the main argument. For these reasons, his reading should probably be rejected.

This does not controvert the fact, however, that the notion of a will here is only superficial. The author really has the two covenants in mind, and he has only shifted the sense slightly because it relates to language of inheritance and the argument he is about to make about the inauguration of the new covenant. The language of 9:16-17 is thus shaped by the covenant idea, and it is not unlikely that the author has Ps. 50:5 in mind as he writes. This might explain some of the peculiarities of the wording. This death which brought inheritance (9:15), therefore, was like a will. With a will, death brings to fruition the promise of inheritance. In a sense, it 'inaugurates' the promises of its testator. So also is the case with the death of Christ, which not only brought about redemption for sins committed under the old covenant, but also enacted the promises of the new.

The author shifts back to the normal sense of the word in 9:18-28. This unit also consists of two contrasting parts: 9:18-22 present the inaugural purification of the old covenant, while 9:23-28 discuss the 'cleansing' of τὰ ἐπουράνια. N. H. Young has noted that the author has again amalgamated and altered the Sinai covenant of Ex. 24 in 9:19-21:

> To the Sinai limitation to blood (Exod. 24.6ff.), he introduces from the red heifer ceremony (Num. 19) the elements water, scarlet, wool and hyssop. In Exod. 24.6ff. the blood is cast against the altar and over the people, in Hebrews the book of the covenant replaces the altar. The writer also includes a sprinkling of blood upon the tent and cultic vessels by adding details from the consecration service of Lev. 8.[76]

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when he refers to them. The word *covenant* is thus restricted elsewhere in the epistle to God's salvific provisions for humanity.

[75]'Hebrews and Galatians' 63.

[76]'Gospel' 205.

As we have argued above, this amalgamation serves to contrast the old covenant as a whole in all its multiplicity with the singular sacrifice of Christ. It is also significant that the author replaces the altar by the book of the covenant, for this confirms once again that the Law and cult in Hebrews are intrinsically bound together and that the people were given the Law on the basis of the Levitical cult (7:11).

This inauguration is in turn contrasted with the cleansing of the 'heavenly things'. We will have to wait until chapter 5 to discuss many of the interpretative questions involved in the interpretation of 9:23f, particularly the question why τὰ ἐπουράνια needed to be cleansed at all and the issue of Platonism in the use of ὑποδείγματα in 9:23.[77] What is significant for the eschatology of the epistle is the same argument which has already been seen in so many different respects. The new covenant offering is intrinsically superior to the old covenant cleansings because it is made in heaven itself ('εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν' — 9:24) and because it only needs to take place once (ἅπαξ — 10:26). The fact that the inaugurations of the two covenants are contrasted in these verses confirms once more that the whole of the old covenant is inferior to the one which Christ has effected because they contrast in this way from their very foundations.

The Law and sacrificial system in Hebrews, therefore, function as a 'σκιά' of coming good things, while not being the 'εἰκών' of those things (10:1). The Levitical priests serve the heavenlies 'ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ' rather than as its actual ministers (8:5). An understanding of the precise nuance of these terms will be illuminating for the author's combination of spatial and temporal motifs in general. For the moment, though, it is enough to note that whether or not these terms have 'Platonic' or 'Philonic' overtones, it is at least clear that the Law only 'fore-shadows'[78] its corresponding 'antitypes' (9:24) in the new covenant as an inferior counterpart. Once the real substance has come, there remains no more need for the Law and its sacrificial system.

Christ, on the other hand, is a minister of the 'true' tent in the heavens (8:1-2) and is now the mediator of a new covenant, which has been put into effect (νενομοθέτηται) on the basis of better promises (8:6). The word νομοθετέω, which occurs in the New Testament only in Hebrews, corresponds precisely here to its use in 7:11. There the word speaks of the establishment of the Law on the basis of the Levitical priesthood. 8:6, on the other hand, speaks of the

[77]See chapter 5, pp. 164-69.

[78]So, for example, R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ALGHJ 4 (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1970) 95.

establishment of a new covenant on the basis of 'better promises' and a new 'sacrificial system', namely, the 'sacrifice' of Christ. In a sense, therefore, the new covenant is put into effect as the 'law' of the new order, with Christ as the sole sacrifice.[79]

C. Christ's high priesthood as an extended metaphor

Before concluding this chapter, we should step back and ask in a general way how the metaphor of priesthood relates to more traditional Christological and soteriological language, excluding for the moment the question of the heavenly tabernacle. We will need at least to raise the question of how committed the author is to the imagery itself; that is, whether he is using it primarily for rhetorical purposes or whether it represents natural categories in which he has now come to think. An inclusion by the author of 'extraneous' factors in his use of the metaphor, which do not rise from the application of traditional language to the given rhetorical situation, could indicate an investment on his part in the language itself beyond what it signifies in more traditional terms.

If such 'extraneous' material were present, the background question could also come into play, for the employment of motifs not arising from a restatement of early Christian motifs could indicate the use of non-Christian traditions, such as is thought to be the case by those who understand Melchizedek in terms of Gnosticism or Qumran. For the remainder of the chapter, therefore, we will examine first the author's use of Melchizedek to present Christ as a high priest and then the use of sacrificial language in the epistle, thereby enabling us to make some preliminary observations on the author's use of the cultic metaphor.

1. Christ's Melchizedekian priesthood

The author conveniently found in Ps. 110:4 an Old Testament text which provided a biblical basis for a messianic high priest. Since this psalm was already in use in Christian circles as a messianic text, the author had a ready made proof text from which to launch his metaphorical venture.[80] In a situation

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[79]Lehne, *New Covenant* 27, holds that there is no law in the new covenant, yet there are certainly aspects of the new covenant which correspond to it, for the Law is a shadow of those things. It is also significant that the author mentions and emphasises that part of the Jeremiah citation where it is said that God will put his *laws* into the minds and hearts of his people (8:10; 10:16). There also remains the possibility of willfully, and thus accidentally, sinning in the new covenant (10:26f). These factors may imply that the author, as Paul, did not mean to nullify certain aspects of the Law considered essential in the true worship of God.

[80]E. g. Mk. 12:35-37; Acts 2:33-36; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; and 1 Pet. 3:22; to name only a few allusions to Ps. 110:1. For a general treatment of the use of Ps. 110 in the New Testament and

in which the author felt that his audience needed to be shown the obsolence of the Levitical cultus, this psalm could have easily inspired the particular form which the author's argument took. Here was a connection between the messiah and priesthood. Christ's death was already considered to have been a sacrifice by early Christianity (cf. Rom. 3:25 and Heb. 2:17), so all that remained was for someone to extend the metaphor just that much further. Thus far there is no need to posit any other influence on the author. Without any non-Christian tradition, he was easily able to read the psalm in terms of two appointments, verse one in terms of a call to enthroned, royal Sonship (1:5, 13; 5:5) and verse four as an appointment to a Melchizedekian high priesthood (5:6).

If the origin of the Melchizedek argument does not require an 'external' influence, does the way in which the author utilises Melchizedek to argue for the superiority of an otherwise unheard of 'order' demonstrate the use of extra-biblical and non-Christian traditions? In keeping with our method, we must first attempt to understand Melchizedek from the standpoint of the text before resorting to background knowledge.

In the text, the author uses the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 as a basis for arguing for the superiority of the Melchizedekian 'order' over that of the Levitical one contained, in a certain sense, within the loins of Abraham (7:9-10). Since Melchizedek blessed Abraham and since Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek, there would seem to be no doubt that Melchizedek is the superior. Here the author has understandably looked to the only other Old Testament passage where Melchizedek is mentioned. He knows what he is looking for, and he is able to use contemporary exegetical methods to make his point: the Melchizedekian order is superior to the Levitical. There is thus still no need to posit extraneous influence.

The question of extra-biblical tradition will largely turn on the meaning of 7:3. Is it understandable within the text as it stands without recourse to other backgrounds? Fortunately, there are several hints which the author provides which elucidate the nature of the case. To begin with, it is significant that the author interprets not only the name of Melchizedek but even that *of the city* of which Melchizedek is king. The author is not referring to Melchizedek as a historical individual who was king of a particular place. Rather, he is interpreting the Melchizedek of the Genesis text.

There are several clues in chapter 7 which support this general observation. In 7:8, for example, the author notes that while 'here' the Levitical priests die, 'there *it is witnessed* that he lives.' Where is this witness made? Since the

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early Christian literature, see D. M. Hay's *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973).

author must be referring to an Old Testament text, the only real candidate must be Ps. 110:4, where it is stated that Christ is a high priest *forever*.[81] This everlasting dimension of the psalm text is the point which the author repeatedly brings out in the chapter. Christ, as a Melchizedekian priest, has succeeded in his service because he serves 'according to the power of an indestructible life' (7:16). While the Levitical priests are hindered by death, Christ has a permanent priesthood (24), since he always lives to intercede (7:25). Clearly it is the enduring aspect of Melchizedek's priesthood as derived from Ps. 110:4 which is the author's focus in argumentation.

Gareth Cockerill has in fact noted that every part of Ps. 110:4 plays a role in the argumentation of chapter 7.[82] 7:11-14, he claims, relates to the phrase 'κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ', 7:15-19 to 'εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα', 7:20-22 to 'ὤμοσεν κύριος, καὶ οὐ μεληθήσεται, and 7:23-25 to 'εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα' once again. While some of these connections seem a bit forced, Cockerill has clearly shown that most of the themes treated in these verses arise from an interpretation of Ps. 110:4 and not from extraneous traditions.

As we have stated, the question of other backgrounds comes down in the end to the nature of 7:3 and perhaps 7:26. The latter, however, does not obviously need background knowledge for explication. How is 7:3 to be understood? There would seem to be much to this verse which does not, at least to twentieth century eyes, derive in any way from either the psalm or Genesis texts. While an angelic being such as *may* be present in 11QMelch[83] could possibly be brought in as an explanation, the nature of the author's argument as 'text-centred' indicates that an exegetical method is more likely.[84]

Such a device is at hand, namely, the interpretative rule, *quod non in Thora, non in Mundo*.[85] This rabbinic and Philonic hermeneutical principal states that if something is not stated in the text, then it can be considered not to exist in an argument. Since there is no father or mother, birth or death recorded of

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[81]Note the same use of μαρτυρέω in 7:17 of this psalm text! Λέγω is similarly used in 7:21.

[82]*The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979) 18.

[83]E.g. A. S. van der Woude, 'Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI', *OTS* 14 (1965) 354-73.

[84]Dr. D. Bauer, Asbury Theological Seminary, has plausibly argued to me (1995) that a reference to an actual figure in these texts would raise the question of why Melchizedek himself did not atone for sins. It seems likely that it is the Melchizedek of the biblical text who is of interest to the author, not the real historical figure.

[85]As Thompson, *Beginnings* 118f., notes, mentioning Str-B 3.694-95 and in Philo, *Det.* 48; and *Ebr.* 14.

Melchizedek in the Genesis text, then he can be said for the sake of argument to be *without* father or mother and *without* beginning of days or end of life.

Why does the author note these omissions in particular? The answer seems to be that the author argues for these characteristics of Melchizedek because he finds them most illustrative of what he wants to argue about Christ, namely, his eternality (cf. 1:3), non-priestly genealogy (7:6), and especially the fact that he has no 'end of life'. Such an observation indicates that the author is moving backwards from Christ to Melchizedek rather than *visa versa*.[86] The author is not really interested in Melchizedek for Melchizedek's sake. His concern is the basis which texts about Melchizedek provide for arguing that Christ is a 'priest' superior to those priests descended from Levi.

The fact that the author is using Melchizedek as a foil for speaking of the superiority of Christ's atoning work to that of the Levitical cultus works in favour of our claim that the metaphor of priesthood is used by the author for rhetorical purposes. When the author says that Christ is 'after the order of Melchizedek', he is not speaking of normal, genealogical descent, but rather means that Christ is after the *likeness* of the Melchizedek of the Old Testament texts (7:15). There is in fact only one Melchizedekian priest in all of history for the author, namely, Christ. The whole argument of chapter 7, therefore, gives a new 'pertinence' to priestly language and is thus metaphorical.

There does not seem to be any evidence, therefore, that the author's use of Melchizedek is dependent upon any non-biblical traditions, nor does the author seem to use Melchizedek in any way other than as a foil and a vehicle for considering Christ as a high priest. This finding tends to support our hypothesis that the author is speaking of Christ as a high priest principally for rhetorical reasons. The argument is thus directed at the audience and may not reflect the author's normal categories of thinking, although we cannot yet determine this question.

2. Sacrifice and offering

If the claim that Christ is a high priest was ultimately based upon the Ps. 110:4 text, there were already early Christian traditions in circulation about Christ's death as a sacrifice which the author was able to develop in order to extend the metaphor of Christ's priesthood further.[87] We have already alluded to Rom. 3:25. James Dunn has argued that Paul would have certainly

[86]As Cockerill, *Melchizedek Christology* 187, has also noted.

[87]For the possibility that the high priesthood metaphor was already born before Hebrews was written, see above, p. 63 and n. 43.

understood this verse in terms of Christ's death as a sacrifice in Day of Atonement terms.[88] Whereas in Romans the sacrifice of Christ is offered *by God*, however, in Hebrews *Christ himself* makes the offering, becoming both the priest and the sacrifice. This extension of the cultic metaphor would seem to be the author of Hebrews' great contribution to Christian theology.

There seems to be a certain imprecision to the author's use of language of sacrifice and offering which may substantiate the claim that the author is developing traditional Christian thought for rhetorical purposes. In the first place, 9:7 would seem to indicate the author's basic understanding of the term προσφέρω with reference to the earthly cultus.[89] The high priest brings blood into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement which he *offers* there. The author's basic understanding of the old covenant precedent, therefore, seems to place the point of 'offering' in the holy of holies.[90]

Since this use of the term *to offer* is the one the author is using to set up the contrast between the work of Christ and that of earthly high priests, one might expect him to follow through and use the word of Christ's entrance into the heavenly holy of holies throughout. One might even presume that such is implied whenever the author speaks of Christ entering the inner sanctum of the heavenly tabernacle. 9:24-25, for example, state that Christ did not enter into the heavenly holy of holies in order to offer himself often, implying that the place of offering was in fact the heavenly holy of holies. 8:4 also strongly implies that the place where Christ is priest is not the earth, but heaven.

The locus of Christ's Melchizedekian high priesthood for the author, therefore, would seem to be heaven. This conclusion is supported by our examination in the previous section of what the author understands by the order of Melchizedek. We noted that by the 'order' of Melchizedek, the author means the *likeness* of Melchizedek's indestructible life (7:15-16). Repeatedly in chapter 7, the author seems to consider the continuing life of Melchizedek as the point of contact with the high priesthood of Christ. The author's metaphor of high priesthood is thus focused upon the heavenly, exalted Christ and one can presume that when the motif of entrance into the heavenly holy of holies is used (e. g. 9:12 and 24), the idea of offering is implied.

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[88]*Romans 1-8* 164.

[89]Here the author is not utilising any known use of the term with regard to the Day of Atonement (so Young, 'Gospel' 208).

[90]So J. H. Davies, 'The Heavenly Work of Christ', in *Text und Untersuchungen* 102 (1968) 387; W. E. Brooks, 'The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews,' *JBL* 89 (1970) 209 n. 15; and Young, 'Gospel' 207.

The author is not consistent, however, with this picture. As many times as the author implicitly connects the offering with entrance into the holy of holies, he seems to connects it with the death of Christ. Young, for example, has gone so far as to argue that the author limits *all* of the references to the offering of Christ to his death.[91] While we disagree that the author refers to Christ's death in every instance, Young seems right to see the offering this way in verses like 9:28 and 10:12. In 10:12, Christ seems to sit in heaven *after* he has offered himself in his death. More significantly, Young argues that the parallelism of death and judgement in 9:27 with Christ's offering and second coming in 9:28 demonstrates conclusively that the offering of Christ for the author occurs in his death on the cross.[92] These incidences, when taken with the fact that at least two of the four occurrences of προσφορά in the epistle are clear references to the *body* of Christ as a sacrifice (10:5 and 10), provide a strong basis for considering the death of Christ as the offering. Even the clearest indication that the offering pertains to the heavenly entrance, 9:24-25, naturally returns to the suffering (i. e. death) motif (9:26).

A quick consideration of the factors involved in the high priestly metaphor, particularly as we have presented it, demonstrates that the slight tension in the author's language should not be surprising. Since the tradition had emphasised the death of Christ as a sacrifice offered by God, and if the author would have thought more naturally in these terms, it would only be reasonable to expect his language to gravitate in this direction, particularly when he was referring to Christ as the offering rather than the offerer.

Indeed, as we have already noted, in the two places where one can discern the referent of προσφορά, a term which is obviously focused on Christ as the offering, the sense is that of Christ's sacrificial death. Similarly, 9:28, one of the most important verses for Young's argument, comes very close to the traditional language of Rom. 3:25 when it uses the (divine) passive of προσφέρω in reference to Christ. Is one surprised, therefore, when one sees that this statement is in parallel to death in 9:27? We would argue that these are places where the traditional categories of Christ's death as a sacrifice show through in the midst of the author's broader argument.

8:4 and 9:24, on the other hand, represent the author in the midst of his argument. In these places, the author is trying to show the parallelism between the two covenants and is arguing for the superiority of the new on the basis of its heavenly nature. It is thus significant for him to present imagery placing

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[91]'Gospel' 208-9.

[92]'Gospel' 209.

Christ's high priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary. In reality, though, the atoning work of Christ spans two realms, and the author blurs the distinction between the two when Christ's offering is concerned.

In our opinion, 9:14 provides the best opportunity for understanding how the two kinds of offering language might fit together. Young considers this verse to be in his favour, thinking it to equate Christ's blood with the offering.[93] In our opinion, however, he has not read the verse closely enough. While the blood of Christ is mentioned and is the subject of the verb καθαριεῖ, Christ is not said here to offer his blood! Rather, he is said to offer *himself, through an eternal spirit.*[94] As we will argue in chapter 4, the author gives no clear indication in the epistle of such a thing as a spiritual body,[95] implying that any offering in the heavenly realm must be an offering made in *spirit.* Such a distinction allows us to suppose that Christ's offering in heaven must be something like the presentation of his blameless spirit to God, while his offering on earth is more akin to the traditional Christian conception of the offering of his body as a sacrifice. If this is the case, then Christ's entrance into the heavenly holy of holies is little more than the passage of his blameless spirit into the heaven of 9:24 in order to sit at God's right hand. Such a reading of the epistle gives strong support to the notion that the high priestly motif for him is primarily the development of a certain metaphor with hortatory value.

To confuse matters further, the author does not restrict his use of the offering motif to parallels with the Day of Atonement. He interestingly uses this language in other contexts in a way which may approach his more natural categories when thinking of sacrifice. In particular, 13:15-16, an allusion to Ps. 50 (49 LXX):14, may be a better representative of the author's thinking, possibly indicating a generally 'non-cultus' orientation on his part.[96] In these verses, the author encourages his recipients to offer sacrifices of praise, good works, and Christian fellowship to God. One supposes that these are the kinds of sacrifices which the author has always thought to be significant.

Language of sacrifice is also used by the author in several non-tabernacle settings. Abel, for example, offers a better sacrifice than Cain long before there is a tabernacle or temple (11:4). Similarly, Abraham offers Isaac, his 'only

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[93]'Gospel' 208.

[94]We would argue that this is a reference to Christ's own eternal spirit and that the meaning here is related to the numerous references to Christ's indestructible life in chapter 7. See chapter 4, p. 134-35, esp. n. 34.

[95]See chapter 4, pp. 132-35.

[96]Along with such hints as his use of Scriptures like Ps. 40 (39 LXX).

begotten'. These two incidences indicate that 'offering' for the author is not necessarily a matter of ritual or even death, let alone a cultic sanctuary. It is primarily a matter of obedience and proper devotion to God. The Aqedah of Isaac in 11:17 is especially revealing on this score, for Abraham did not actually go through with the sacrifice of Isaac. The perfect tense of προσφέρω, nevertheless, is used to indicate that Abraham did in fact offer Isaac,[97] although the imperfect seems to indicate more concretely that he did not succeed with the offering.[98] By inference, therefore, it is Christ's reverence and obedience to God's will which, for the author, is the substance of the offering and not his actual death. This fact lends some support to our interpretation of Christ's offering of himself through his spirit in heaven.

Another place where the importance of obedience in an offering to God is highlighted is in the use of προσφέρω in 5:7, where the earthly Jesus 'offers' prayers and petitions to God. On the one hand, this 'offering' seems more analogous to the 'offerings' of praises and good works in chapter 13 than to the Yom Kippur metaphor. On the other hand, this verse relates to the author's statements at the beginning of chapter 5 concerning earthly high priests. The author wishes to show, on the one hand, that Christ can sympathise with the weaknesses of humanity, but that he also was without sin in the learning of obedience. The author's more usual focus of Christ's priesthood on his exaltation (e.g. 8:4 and perhaps even 5:9-10)[99] gives way to his desire to contrast the earthly Jesus with the earthly high priests, resulting in a minor tension between the two motifs. Once again, there would seem to be evidence that the author is using the language of priesthood for rhetorical purposes.

It should be mentioned that Harold Attridge foreshadows our understanding of the development of Hebrews' high priestly metaphor when he conjectures that the author throughout the epistle has reinterpreted a traditional image of Christ's high priesthood in such a way that certain tensions in the language have resulted.[100] Attridge formulates this hypothesis in terms of a distinction between

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[97]Attridge (*Hebrews* 334 n. 9) notes that the author uses the perfect often in similar contexts (7:6, 9, 11; 8:5, 6, 13; 10:9; 11:28). In some of these instances, the fact that the author is interpreting Scripture may come into play.

[98]Taking it as a conative imperfect, expressing that Abraham 'tried to offer' Isaac. So Michel, *Hebräer* 401-2; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2:253; J. Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah*, AnBib 94 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981) 122; and Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word (Dallas: Word, 1991) 361.

[99]I generally disagree with F. Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung: Die paränetische Funktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief*, BU 15 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1980) 121 n. 222, who argues against an interpretation of high priesthood in Hebrews which is focused on Christ's exaltation.

[100]*Hebrews* 146-47.

an intercessory model of Christ's high priesthood which existed in the Christian tradition and a restatement by the author of Christ's high priesthood in terms of Yom Kippur. To Attridge, therefore, the motif which associates Christ high priesthood with his exaltation arises from the tradition, while the Yom Kippur high priestly imagery gives rise to language such as that of 5:7, where the earthly Jesus seems to be performing a priestly function upon the earth.

My analysis, on the other hand, differs from Attridge in that I am not certain that the intercessory motif in the earlier tradition was a *priestly* motif. Similarly, I would note that the earlier tradition already understood Christ's death in terms of Yom Kippur, but that the author advances this metaphor primarily by considering Christ the high priest within that motif. This shift transforms both Christ's death *and* the exaltation motif. It is in this latter case where I, in contrast to Attridge, see the author's real innovation in the extension of the cultic metaphor.

The author, therefore, does not have a rigid scheme in mind where Christ's sacrifice is exclusively identified with the earth and the offering with his entrance into a heavenly holy of holies.[101] Rather, he is mixing more traditional language with various themes which arise from the metaphor of high priesthood. The death of Christ can thus be referred to either as the sacrifice or the offering (traditional); and, similarly, his death can be distinguished from his offering, with the latter being the entrance of his blameless spirit into the heavenly holy of holies (Hebrews' rhetoric). Strictly speaking, however, the author's specific development of the metaphor envisages Christ as a *heavenly* high priest (cf. 8:4) rather than one who functions on the earth.

The passage of Christ's eternal spirit through the heavens (e.g. 4:14f.), therefore, is likened by the author in some way to the entrance of Christ as a high priest into a heavenly holy of holies. Here, the ascension would seem to be incorporated into the metaphor as the approach to God's throne in the true tabernacle. The traditional notion of Christ as an intercessor sitting at God's right hand (cf. Rom. 8:34) can also be utilised. The potential relationship between chapter 1 and the main argument of the epistle, therefore, may be the difference between a statement of Christ's exaltation in the author's more usual categories and a metaphorical re-presentation of the same datum in rhetorically charged, high priestly terms.

A reasonable case can be made, therefore, that the main argument of Hebrews is made through the extension of a cultic metaphor already existent in early Christian tradition which understood Christ's death in sacrificial terms.

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[101]I therefore reject not only the arguments of Young but also those of Brooks ('Perpetuity' 212), who believes that 'the cross is not the sacrifice' and that it is only after Christ enters the eternal sphere that his sacrifice takes on an eternal quality.

The author extends this language by considering Christ himself as the high priest and by further relating his exaltation and session to the motif. We would argue that the author does so primarily for rhetorical purposes in order to persuade the readers of the superiority of Christ's atonement to that of the Levitical cultus. Our consideration of the tabernacle in chapter 5 will provide an additional opportunity to test this thesis.

V. *Conclusion*

In this chapter we have attempted to explore the discontinuities between the two ages in an attempt to elucidate the nature of the key event within the plot of salvation history. We thus began with a general consideration of how the author structured his argument around a division of salvation history into two broad epochs, the former days and 'these last days'. The latter phrase was seen to relate to the Jeremiah citation of chapter 8, demonstrating that the recent speaking through Christ marked in fact the inauguration of the new covenant and the eschatological age.

We then examined how the new covenant/two age distinction might relate to the contrast of Christ with the angels in chapter one. We argued that the author included this contrast because 1) Christ is below the angels 'for a little while' in Ps. 8 and 2) the angels were seen as mediators of the Law. This latter fact in particular was used to argue that the contrast in chapter one is also eschatological in nature. The exalted Christ is in view throughout as the one now higher than the angels since he has been crowned with glory and honour. We thus joined those interpreters who see a connection between the catena in chapter one and the new covenant contrast, suggesting that this connection supports suggestions concerning 1:5-2:18 as a *narratio* providing a rhetorically effective introduction in more traditional language than that used in the author's main arguments in the following chapters.

Following the discussion of the angels, we addressed the author's main interest in his use of covenant language, namely, to contrast the high priestly work of Christ with that of the Levitical priests. We noted that the author repeatedly argued for the superiority of Christ's 'offering' by pitting it against the entirety of the Levitical cultus, amalgamating all of the various rituals of the old covenant together in their multiplicity. The author used the Law, Levitical cultus, and old covenant as roughly interchangeable entities all of which are now obsolete in the light of Christ's singular offering.

Finally, we argued that the author's use of Melchizedek and of high priesthood language in general was metaphorical, since it took the more

customary meanings of terms and gave them new meanings. Melchizedek, for example, was seen to be a textual foil used by the author solely to present Christ as a high priest of a superior nature to the Levitical priests. Similarly, we argued that minor tensions in the author's language of sacrifice and offering betrayed points at which his high priestly metaphor was interacting with more traditional Christian formulations of Yom Kippur imagery. The emphasis we will increasingly place upon the author's metaphorical use of cultic language to make a rhetorically effective argument is, in our opinion, one of the most significant contributions this study makes to Hebrews scholarship.

In terms of the storyline of salvation history, this chapter has indicated that the plot can be divided roughly into two broad ages corresponding to the two covenants. These two epochs overlap, for the old covenant is only near to its disappearance. In addition, while the new covenant is decisively here, it has not fully arrived. The sacrifice of Christ, however, must be considered as the decisive 'curtain opening' of the second act of the drama, for the author's emphasis is certainly on the completed aspect of Christ's work. Christ's accomplishment is in fact the basis for the author's exhortations. The second act must therefore be seen in two stages, beginning with the 'today' of the story, a time in which the full impact of Christ's work has not reached its completion. The final scene will only come after Christ has 'appeared a second time' (9:28).

CHAPTER 3
The Destiny of Humanity

I. *Introduction*

The preceding chapter sketched the general contours of the plot of salvation history in Hebrews. There it was seen that Hebrews divides this plot into two broad 'acts', namely, the age of the first covenant with its Law and the age of the new covenant which was established by Christ. These two epochs, furthermore, were seen to overlap, creating a third 'in between' period in which the old has not completely disappeared and the new has not fully come.

In an endeavour to outline the general pattern of the underlying story behind the author's argument, the preceding chapter inevitably focused on the boundaries and differences between the ages. It examined the way in which Hebrews contrasts the old and new covenants with one another. We concluded that the Law and Levitical cultus are virtually synonymous with the old covenant in Hebrews, so much so that they *must* be abandoned even though the old age has not completely vanished. The high priesthood of Christ, on the other hand, was the determinative element of the new covenant and contrasted directly with both the Law and the Levitical cultus. Significantly, we noted that the author was using language of priesthood with reference to Christ metaphorically in order to argue persuasively to his audience. We felt that such an observation could be key to understanding the epistle and that it should be borne in mind throughout the study.

We also suggested in the previous chapter that the association of the angels with the former age and the mediation of the Law was a key factor in the author's contrast between them and Christ in chapter one, although the possibility of problems in the theology of the recipients was not completely precluded. We noted that this tended to favour interpretations of Hebrews' structure which consider 1:5-2:18 as an introduction to the author's coming argument. All of the contrasts in the epistle align themselves with the general eschatological contrast between the old and new covenants and their respective ministers and characteristics.

The task of this chapter is to explore the continuities between the two ages of salvation history. One might get from the preceding study a false impression of complete discontinuity between these epochs, but that would be a misleading impression. While the citation of Jeremiah 31:32, for example, might be taken to mean that the reason for God's introduction of a new covenant was the failure of those who received the first one to remain in it, this verse should not be allowed to obscure the more basic sense in Hebrews that God had always

intended to save through Christ and that there was always something implicitly inferior about the Law and Levitical cultus. This overall sense of divine purpose and continuity gives a unified coherence to the plot of salvation history in the epistle.

In order to delineate this general element of continuity, chapter 3 will begin by considering the function of Psalm 8 in the epistle, claiming that the passage was understood by the author to apply both to Christ and to the people of God. This psalm reveals God's intended destiny for humanity while also providing a framework for approaching the epistle's soteriology.

Secondly, the chapter will explore the theme of promise and fulfillment in the epistle, firmly demonstrating the purpose of God in the whole of the story. This section will deal with several of the motifs which the author connects to language of promise, such as the rest of God, the heavenly destination of believers, and the author's use of perfection language. It will also examine the recurring imagery of various sorts which the author uses to demonstrate the firmness of God's plan and of his solution to the need for salvation.

Finally, the chapter will examine ways in which the author seems to view elements of the old covenant as foreshadowings or types of corresponding features in the new age. These various lines of inquiry will demonstrate that there is a fundamental continuity between the old and new covenants in Hebrews because they are both part of God's plan (and his spoken *logos*) in salvation history. The consistency of God's purpose throughout the plot guarantees its unity.

II. *Psalm 8 and the Coming World*

The use of Psalm 8 in chapter 2 of Hebrews has often been understood Christologically.[1] This is not surprising for several reasons. For one thing, this passage seems to be understood Christologically in the rest of the New Testament, where it is often used in conjunction with Ps. 110:1, which also

[1]E. g. E. Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, translated by R. Harrisville and I. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 [1957]) 122f; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KEK, 8th edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1984) 138-39; O. Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959) 188; S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961) 29-31; A. T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965) 163, 166; S. G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews* (Zurich: EVZ-Verlag, 1965) 80f; G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972) 26; P. Giles, 'The Son of Man in Hebrews', *ET* 86 (1975) 328-32; H. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1991) 194; to name a few.

features in Hebrews 1:13 and is alluded to several times in the epistle.[2] These two Psalms were easily associated through their common use of the word πούς and their similar statements of subjection. While Ps. 8:7 reads, 'πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ' (originally in reference to humanity), Ps. 110:1 (109 LXX) says, 'Κάθου ... ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου.' It is not difficult to see how these two passages came to be interpreted in the light of one another.

The earliest association between the two comes in 1 Cor. 15:25-27, where Paul transposes the 'all' of Ps. 8:7 to the 'enemies' of Ps. 110:1. In doing so, Paul is able to claim that the last of the enemies to be put under Christ's feet is death.[3] The author of Ephesians also inherits this connection, similarly placing every ruler, authority, power, and lordship under the feet of the reigning king (1:20-22).[4] The association elsewhere in the New Testament is not definitive, but may be implicitly assumed in the use of ὑποκάτω rather than ὑποπόδιον in Mk. 12:36 and Mt. 22:44,[5] in the standing posture of Stephen in Acts 7:55-6, and in the submission of angelic powers in 1 Pet. 3:21-22.[6] This regular association of Ps. 8 with Ps. 110:1 in the whole of early Christian tradition available to us is an extremely strong argument that the use in Hebrews 2:6-8 should be understood Christologically.

A second aspect of Ps. 8 which might lend itself to a Christological interpretation is the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in 8:5.[7] Although the author does not make any explicit, Christological use of this expression in his argument, it could be suggested that the phrase would have such connotations to him. Otto Michel, for example, claims that '[d]as Geheimnis des Menschensohnes wird vorausgesetzt', although 'wie bei Paulus so auch im Hebr der Begriff des

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[2]In 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; and 12:2. For a discussion of the way in which the author uses Ps. 110:1 in each case, see D. Hay's *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (New York: Abingdon, 1973) 85-89 and J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1989) 108ff. H. Weiss writes, 'der Autor des Hebr mit seiner christologischen Deutung von Ps 8 seinerseits bereits in einer urchristlichen Auslegungstradition steht, in der mit der christologischen Deuten von Ps 8 zugleich auch die entsprechende Deutung von Ps 110,1 verbunden war' (*Hebräer* 194).

[3]Again, for further exploration of the way the two are associated with each other here, see Hay, *Glory* 36-37 and Dunn, *Christology* 107ff.

[4]See *Glory* 127.

[5]*Glory* 35.

[6]*Glory* 75-76; 127-128

[7]Those who read Ps. 8 exclusively in terms of Christ would naturally tend to understand this phrase in this way. See n. 1.

Menschensohnes an sich fehlt.'[8] One thus can see another possible basis for associating this psalm exclusively with Christ.

On a different level, a radical relationship between Christ and the other sons seems to result if the passage is taken to apply to humanity in general. Thus taken, the psalm would seem to envisage the sons crowned with glory and honour like Christ, with the All in subjection to them as well. There comes to be a significant similarity between humanity and Christ as verse 9 moves from the glory promised to humankind to the glory fulfilled in Jesus as the representative of his 'brothers'.[9] Ernst Käsemann long ago took exception to this interpretation as found in Julius Kögel, claiming that '[n]owhere in the New Testament is Jesus set on the same level with us in such fashion.'[10] Although Käsemann's Gnostic reading of this text need no longer stand in the way of Kögel's line of argument, the resulting implications of such an interpretation for Christology should be examined carefully.

Of the arguments for reading the passage Christologically, the first one is very strong indeed and implies that the author must have understood the psalm to pertain to Christ in some way unless he was in disagreement with the tradition he was utilising. The second argument, on the other hand, is not substantive, for the Son of man title is not used in Hebrews and can only be implicit in the psalm *at best.* What about an 'anthropological' reading of the psalm? The important recognition that Ps. 110:1 and Ps. 8 are associated in early Christian tradition does not preclude an 'anthropological' *aspect* to the author's interpretation, as we shall see. It is important, therefore, to attempt to read the psalm passage in its context in Hebrews and then to return to these questions.

The citation of Psalm 8 is introduced in 2:5 with the statement that '[God] has not subjected the coming world to angels', the implication being that the one(s) to whom God has subordinated that world is the referent of the psalm quotation. Who this might be is not at all clear in the context of the author's discussion. The contrast in chapter 1 is clearly between Christ and the angels, a contrast which continues in the paraenesis of 2:1-4. In 2:2-3, the angels as the 'speakers' of the Law are contrasted with Christ as the 'speaker' of salvation in the new covenant. Since 2:5 follows directly on this exhortation, it might be

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[8]*Hebräer* 138.

[9]J. Kögel favoured this interpretation at the beginning of this century, in *Der Sohn und die Söhne: Eine exegetische Studie zu Hebräer 2,5-18*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 8, 5-6 (Gütersloh, 1904) 34.

[10]*Wandering* 122-26. Käsemann here argues against Kögel's claim that Jesus is thus the 'preeminent type of the human race' (126). Käsemann could never allow such an interpretation to stand in the light of his reading of Christ as the Gnostic *Urmensch.*

taken rather straightforwardly that the contrast between the angels and Christ is still in view.

The problem with this interpretation is of course that there is also a third party involved in the discussion, namely, those who are 'about to inherit salvation'. In 1:14 the author concludes chapter 1 by describing the angels in this way. They are 'ministering spirits sent to minister because of those about to inherit salvation'. The implication of this verse is that the object of the angels' ministry is none other than those destined for salvation. They are in fact 'sent for ministry',[11] implying that one of their functions is to help humanity in their pilgrimage toward salvation. This statement interestingly implies that the role of the angels in relation to humanity is about to change in the coming world, when there will no longer be a need for this particular kind of ministry on the part of the angels.[12]

If there were any question whether there is an implicit contrast in 1:14 between the sons and the angels, the matter seems to be confirmed in 2:16. Here it is stated that '[Christ] certainly is not taking hold of angels, but he is taking hold of the seed of Abraham.' This enigmatic statement should be understood in the light of 2:10, where Christ is the 'leader of salvation' who brings 'many sons to glory'. Christ is thus 'taking hold' of the seed of Abraham to lead them to glory. It should be noted immediately that Ps. 8 in 2:7 also speaks of a glory, a glory of which Christ certainly partakes (2:9). Do not 2:10 and 16 imply that there is a similar glory which pertains to the children of God in general and that the psalm could perhaps also apply to them? The clear implication is that the psalm applies both to humanity *and* to Christ.

If the idea that the children of God are being led to glory in contrast to the angels is taken into account in the earlier part of the chapter, a fuller interpretation of the previous verses becomes possible. First of all, this glory is undoubtedly to be equated in some way with the salvation of 1:14 and 2:3. The sons and daughters of God are clearly 'those about to inherit salvation', and the salvation which is 'spoken' by the Lord is addressed to the people of God. When the author goes on to note in 2:5 that he has been speaking about 'the coming world', it becomes clear that this 'world' is none other than the place of salvation and glory to which Christ is leading the sons.

There would be a clear continuity between 1:14, 2:5, and 2:16, therefore, if 2:5 were taken to refer in the first instance to the children of God. The angels are only servants for the sons until they inherit salvation, for the coming world is

[11]The phrase 'εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα' seems best taken in this way, taking the participle with what precedes it rather than with what follows.

[12]See chapter 2, p. 56-62.

not subjected to them, but to the sons.[13] Christ is not leading the angels to this glory, but he is taking hold of the seed of Abraham. As 2:16 is implicitly hortatory by way of a contrast between the angels and the seed of Abraham, so the author's mind is led in this direction after the exhortation of 2:1-4 as a substantiation of the importance of endurance.

Kögel also offered the placement of Jesus' name in 2:9 as an argument for this reading of the psalm: 'Die nachdrucksvolle, auch durch die Stellung ausgezeichnete Hervorhebung des Namens Jesus bestätigt, daß bisher von ihm nicht die Rede gewesen sein kann.'[14] While this claim is not definitive, it certainly does lend a certain plausibility to an *initially* 'anthropological' reading of the psalm. In this interpretation, the author mentions the psalm at first with reference to humanity in general (or, more precisely, to the seed of Abraham), but points out that this situation with everything in subjection to a glorified humanity is 'not yet' the case (2:8). Rather, we see another person made lower than the angels for a little while,[15] namely, Jesus, who makes it possible for the sons to be led to the glory intended for them in God's purposes (2:10). The author, thus, sets up a problem as he presents the psalm, highlighting the fact that humanity's intended glory is presently in a state of unfulfillment. He does this, however, in order to introduce God's solution to the problem, namely, Jesus, who is also made lower than the angels for a little while, until he finds the glory and honour of the psalm through his suffering of death, now only waiting until his enemies might be put under his feet (10:13).

All of the preceding gives strong reason to believe that the author wanted *or perhaps expected* his recipients to think of humanity in general when they first heard the reading of the psalm, only thereafter to realise that the psalm found its ultimate fulfilment in Christ. In fact, since Hebrews is a speech meant to persuade, it is tempting to conjecture that the author is leading the readers from their interpretation of the psalm to his, although it would be difficult to prove

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[13]G. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, SNT 73 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 115, raises the possibility that 'the author points to some semantic continuation between units of the same genre that is not shared by intervening units of the other genre'. By this he implies that there is a certain continuity of argument between 1:14 and 2:5 which is not destroyed by the intervening paraenesis. Although one should be extremely cautious about this suggestion, it does make excellent sense of the problematic unit 5:11-6:20. If this contention is roughly the case, then my contention that the author has at least the people of God in mind in 2:5 is given very strong support, since they are certainly the ones about to inherit salvation in 1:14.

[14]*Sohn* 33.

[15]I follow L. Hurst when he writes, 'The author takes βραχύ τι not as an expression of degree but as a period of time according to the Jewish two-age theory', 'The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2', *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, edited by L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 154 n. 11.

this. In any case, it is important not to see a stark opposition between a Christological reading of the text and one which believes the psalm to apply to the seed of Abraham as well. The fact that Christ came in order to make it possible that the sons could also be led to glory, as in 2:10, makes it clear that the author believed Ps. 8 to be pertinent to both the Son and the sons. If, as we shall claim, the author always had Christ in mind as the means by which this purpose would be accomplished, rather than as some *ad hoc* solution, then it becomes clear that the author understands the psalm 'filially', applying to all of God's children, both as fundamentally Christological and anthropological, for the two parties are both 'ἐξ ἑνός'.[16] Such a reading does not contradict the way in which the relationship between Ps. 8 and Ps. 110:1 is conceived in the rest of the New Testament. It suggests, rather, that early Christianity always understood Psalm 8 to apply to Christ as the Last Adam, the one who fulfills the true destiny of humanity, a destiny they were never able to fulfil on their own.[17] Once the psalm is applied to Christ in this way, it can then be related to Ps. 110:1 of Christ in his exalted state.

Ps. 8 in Hebrews 2:6-8, therefore, presents us with a context for the continuity of God's purposes toward the people of God as they move toward their ultimate salvation at the end of the story of salvation history. They are intended for glory and honour, as well as to rule. This goal, however, has not yet been attained. The main hindrance, as it appears in the latter part of chapter 2, would seem to be death. Jesus is said to have been crowned with glory and honour 'on account of death', and he is said to do this 'so that he might taste death on behalf of everyone' (2:9). For humanity, a tension exists between their inevitable death and their intended crowning with glory and honour. Whereas for Christ, his victorious death *entails* being crowned with glory, this is not the case for humanity in general. They live in the fear of death all of their lives (2:15) and have not thus far attained to the exalted status of the psalm.[18] Christ's righteous death, on the other hand, ordained in the purposes of God (2:10), was such that it destroyed the one holding the power of death, the Devil

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[16]I have discussed the relationship between Sonship and sonship in great detail in a paper entitled, 'Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in the Epistle to the Hebrews', presented at the Hebrews and General Epistles Group of S.B.L., November, 1995.

[17]Such is J. D. G. Dunn's interpretation of the psalm's use in Hebrews and elsewhere in the New Testament. See *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd edition (London: SCM, 1989) 110f.

[18]The basis of this difference between Christ and the other sons in relation to death is not explicitly stated in the epistle, although there are hints of an explanation in the fact that Christ was 'without sin' (4:15) and was saved 'out of death' because of his 'reverent fear' (5:7). For this interpretation of 5:7, see H. Attridge's article '"Heard Because of His Reverence" (Heb 5:7)', *JBL* 98 (1979) 90-93.

(2:14), and thus enabled the other sons to pass through the barrier of death into their intended glory. Through the atonement provided by Christ (2:17), the seed of Abraham are thus led to glory (2:16) in fulfilment of the psalm. The one for whom the All exists and through whom it came to be knew the appropriate means by which he might lead his sons to the glory intended for them (2:10). This interpretation of the psalm thus provides us with a reference point when considering God's continuity of purpose throughout salvation history.

III. *Promise and Fulfilment*

The previous section of this chapter has discussed Psalm 8 in rather broad terms as a general statement of God's intention to lead humanity to glory and honour through Christ. There, we noted that the author equates this intended glory with salvation (1:14; 2:3) and with the coming world (2:5). The precise nature of this 'glory and honour', however, was not elucidated, although it was clear that this state will involve a superceding of death.

Another motif running through the epistle which contributes to a more specific understanding of what the author understands by these terms is found in language of promise in the epistle. Since this theme appears in various contexts throughout Hebrews, it provides at least one way of connecting several of the author's images together.[19] Although the author does not use promise language in a wholly uniform manner,[20] he does repeatedly indicate that the readers are the bearers of a promise which God has tendered to them. In particular, Hebrews almost without exception uses the singular of ἐπαγγελία in such a way as to give it eschatological overtones, interlocking it with other images to flesh out what is meant by expressions like 'salvation', 'coming world', and 'glory and honour'.

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[19]C. Rose has even gone so far as to consider whether promise and fulfilment can be considered 'das "*Basismotiv des Hebräerbriefes*"', 'Verheißung und Erfüllung: Zum Verständnis von ἐπαγγελία im Hebräerbrief', *BZ* 33 (1989) 191. It certainly is one of several central motifs which the author uses to make a connection between salvation history and the author's exhortation.

[20]S. Lehne claims that modern readers might consider the author's use of the singular and plural of ἐπαγγελία to have 'inconsistencies', *The New Covenant in Hebrews*, JSNTSS 44 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 20. After attempting to apply the epistle's multiplicity/unity pattern to the use of ἐπαγγελία, Lehne, *Covenant* 20, notes of the word *promise* that, in general, 'singularity denotes the new dispensation and plurality the old'. As Lehne indicates, however, Hebrews does not exhibit this pattern consistently. While God is always the one who gives a promise in Hebrews (God is always the subject of ἐπαγγέλλομαι in Hebrews: 6:13; 10:23; 11:11; 12:26), the author can speak of both promises already received (e.g. 6:15; 11:33) and promises yet to be inherited (e.g. 11:13).

A. The content of the promise

1. The promised rest

The first occurance of ἐπαγγελία in the epistle is in 4:1, where the recipients are encouraged to guard against falling short of entering God's rest, in the light of the fact that God has given this promise. The metaphor of entering into rest, therefore, is yet another image of the 'destiny' of humanity. The phrase is drawn from the language of Psalm 95 (94 LXX), where it is said that the Israelites did not enter into God's rest because they had hardened their hearts, referring to God's punishment of the wilderness generation by not allowing them entrance into the promised land. The author uses this example of disobedience as a warning to the hearers of the epistle not to disobey or disbelieve God's promise to them.

The pericope (3:7-4:13) does not make the exact time of entrance into God's rest clear, rendering ambiguity as well on the exact nature of what the author means by 'rest'. On the one hand, the fact that the author can exhort his audience to encourage one another each day not to harden their hearts seems to imply that they have not yet entered definitively into rest. On the other hand, the author states that 'εἰσερχόμεθα' into rest, using the present tense (4:3) and speaks in terms of doing so 'today' (4:7). This seeming ambiguity has led different scholars to speak of the entrance into rest as occuring either in the present or the future, often in relation to their interpretation of the background of the epistle.

Ceslas Spicq, for example, whose commentary is perhaps the most consistently Philonic in interpretation, quite predictably holds that εἰσερχόμεθα in 4:3 'n'est pas à prendre au sens du futur (Vulg. *ingrediemur*), ni de "nous sommes sûrs d'entrer" (Lemonnyer, Moffatt, Gayford, Médebielle).' Rather, 'c'est l'affirmation d'une réalité actuelle envisagée d'une part en fonction du dessein de Dieu (Westcott) qui garantit à la foi l'accès au repos ... et d'autre part de la conscience chrétienne qui sait que la foi est pleine d'espérance'.[21] Michel, on the other hand, who attempts to interpret the epistle 'apocalyptically', writes, 'εἰσερχόμεθα tritt für das Futurum ein ("wir werden eingehen ...")'.[22] Finally, C.K. Barrett, seeking a *via media*, speaks of the rest as 'both present and future; men enter it, and must strive to enter it.'[23]

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[21]*L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 2, 3rd edition, EtBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 81-82.

[22]*Hebräer* 194.

[23]'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, edited by W. D. Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1956) 372.

As we shall increasingly see, Barrett has not only found an intermediate position, but his interpretation also seems to capture best the author's intent. On the one hand, Michel is right to see the inevitably future aspect of the passage. When the author says that a promise remains of entering into rest (4:1), 'die Verheißung steht also noch aus.'[24] The recipients cannot reach a point in their earthly life when they can say that they have conclusively entered God's rest. They will only have such surety when they have held the substance of their faith 'μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν' (3:14). As will become apparent, the imagery of a heavenly homeland which occurs later in the epistle is too similar to this language of entrance for them not to be generally equated. All of these factors inevitably put the principal accent of rest language on the future entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem.

On the other hand, the present dimension of this entrance should not be underplayed. The emphasis which the author places on σήμερον indicates that he sees this 'entrance' as a matter of daily decision to endure. We are to exhort one another 'ἄχρις οὗ τὸ σήμερον καλεῖται', so that we are not hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13). Each day, therefore, is yet another 'today' in which one must enter into God's rest. In a figure, we enter into God's rest every day that we choose to be faithful and rest from our 'works' (4:10).

The term *today* actually serves an even broader function in the epistle than simply as a reminder of the need for daily endurance. In the larger context of the epistle, 'today' is an eschatological category.[25] It appears, for example, in 1:5 in the citation of Psalm 2. Since the author cites two psalms with this motif[26] and explicitly draws attention to the term in 3:13 and 4:7, it seems logical to conclude that there was a connection in his mind. Since σήμερον appears in the context of Christ's exaltation in 1:5, it seems likely that 'today' is a term strictly appropriate for the new age, when Christ has initiated a new covenant and has sat on the right hand of God.[27] As Charles Anderson has written, '[t]oday is identical to the "last days", that relatively brief period between the two appearances of Jesus (9:28) in which the opportunity of

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[24]*Hebräer* 193.

[25]C. P. Anderson speaks of 'today' as an 'apocalyptic category', making the same basic claims as I am, 'The Heirs of the New Age in Hebrews', *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, edited by J. Marcus and M. L. Soards, JSNTSS 24 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 255-57. Given recent debate on the usefulness of the term *apocalyptic* in such contexts when not referring to the genre (e.g., see C. Rowland's *The Open Heaven* [London: SPCK, 1982]), the term *eschatological* seems more appropriate.

[26]The other of course being Ps. 95 (94 LXX) in the context under discussion.

[27]For our interpretation of chapter 1 in the context of the new covenant and Christ's exaltation, see chapter 2, pp. 56-62.

salvation is offered.' 'It never existed prior to the age of the new covenant'.[28] When the author concludes the epistle by saying that Jesus Christ is the same, 'yesterday, today, and forever' (13:8), 'today' is that period of eschatological fulfilment in which Christ has caused the new age to begin although the old has not yet definitively vanished. It is that 'other day' about which God spoke in Psalm 35 (4:8), the ever recurring day in which his people choose to enter rest.

It can be said, therefore, that the rest of God is primarily future but with an important present dimension. It is primarily future, for those who believe must daily 're-enter' into God's rest, never reaching it definitively in this present in-between time. On the other hand, they do in a sense enter into God's rest daily, especially since Christ has already definitively provided perfection for those who are being sanctified (10:14). The motif of rest, therefore, seems to connect in some way both to the future 'coming world' of 2:5 and to the present cleansing of conscience which Christ has effected (e.g. 9:14).

If in fact these are parallel images, then they offer clarification on the nature of the 'rest' proffered by God. The image of the heavenly city of the coming world, for example, with all of its connecting pictures and content, pertains to the ultimate meaning of rest, in contrast to any present suffering of the community (e.g. 12:4).[29] The author holds out the promise that there will be a day when the people of God will not feel like strangers in a foreign land but will find an end to their wandering. On the other hand, the rest also seems to be related to perfection language, which is also related to the motif of promise in Hebrews. Since the author speaks of the sabbath rest of God as the resting of the believer 'ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός' (4:10), he may use God's sabbath rest as an analogy for the cleansing of the believer 'from dead works'.[30] An examination of these other images, therefore, will further elucidate both what the content of God's promises is and what the author understood by 'the rest of God'.

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[28]'Heirs' 256.

[29]As we have already argued in brief, the repeated exhortations to endure, particularly in the midst of discussions of God's 'discipline', make it difficult to deny that the recipients of Hebrews were going through some kind of difficult time. See chapter 1, 43-44 and n. 117-119.

[30]Such an analogy seems odd, but may tie into certain biases the author holds toward the creation. See chapter 4 below, p. 123-30. The sense of the statement is in any case ambiguous (so also Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989] 131).

2. The land of promise

The following two chapters of this study will inevitably deal at great length with what the author understands heaven to be. That discussion will focus on the cosmological aspects of heaven in relation to the created earthly realm. For the moment, however, it will be helpful to introduce the heavenly realm in terms of the motif of promise in Hebrews, focusing on heaven as an eschatological destination in the epistle.

More than any other, chapter 11 utilises the motif of promise to exhort the recipients of the epistle to endurance. The word first appears in the singular in 11:9, where Abraham is said to have sojourned in the 'land of promise' in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were 'fellow heirs' of the promise. On first glance, this verse might be thought to be an exception to our earlier statement that the singular of ἐπαγγελία usually has eschatological overtones in the epistle. Here the word is clearly used of the land of Canaan promised to the patriarchs, and 6:15 even goes so far as to say that Abraham *obtained* the promises, there in reference to the multiplication of his seed. These factors might be taken to imply the absence of eschatological overtones in this case.

Hebrews 11:13, however, in the immediate context of 11:9, states that the patriarchs and Sarah all died 'not having received the promises'. This verse indicates that the author's purpose in chapter 11 is somewhat different from his purpose in chapter 6. As we shall see, in chapter 6 the author's purpose is to substantiate the reliability of God's promises in order to bolster the confidence of the hearers in their faith. To this end, his exhortation stays on the level of Old Testament history. He wishes to show that God kept his promise to Abraham because Abraham was patient (6:15). In chapter 11, however, the author's interest is eschatological and is aimed at the hearers of the epistle who have not yet received God's promise. The 'land of promise' does not simply refer to Canaan, therefore, as can be seen by the remainder of 11:13. The patriarchs died without having received the promises, but they saw them afar off and greeted them and confessed 'that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.' The author now comes to his point. Persons such as the patriarchs are really seeking a 'homeland' (11:14). This country is not earthly, however; it is a 'heavenly' reality (11:16). This heavenly homeland is the 'city' which God has prepared for the people of God (11:16). When the author speaks of the 'land of promise', therefore, he is really alluding to the heavenly destination of those who believe and endure.

The fact that the people of God are 'aliens on the earth' and are longing for a homeland ties in directly with the motif of rest in 3:7-4:11, for there the people of God are also seeking the promised land of rest. The motif of rest and that of a

heavenly city constitute elements of the same promise given to those who believe. The theme is taken up again in chapter 13, although there without any reference to promise. In 13:13-14, the author's exhortation to go 'outside the camp' to Christ, bearing his reproach, is justified by the fact that 'here we have no lasting [μένουσαν] city'. Rather, 'we are seeking the one to come [μέλλουσαν].' The idea of a 'coming' city is obviously related to the 'coming [μέλλουσαν] world' of 2:5 and the 'ones about [μέλλοντας] to inherit salvation' in 1:14. All of these images are refering to the same thing, the future destination and hope of those who are being saved. It is the rest of God, a heavenly homeland, a city prepared by God. It is the coming world and salvation.

The 'land of promise', therefore, relates directly to the futurist aspect of the rest motif. It also relates to the author's description of the heavenly Jerusalem and Mt. Zion in 12:22, the city of the living God and the ultimate destination of God's people. The purpose of this image is, once again, to justify to the hearers the reason for their struggles on the earth, while at the same time offering them hope as an incentive to endure. The promise offered by this motif, therefore, is that of a home, a place where they truly belong and will no longer be subject to the troubles of resident aliens. This is an eternal inheritance (9:15), one which they will never have to fear losing as long as they stay faithful till the end.

3. Perfection and promise

Thus far, we have discussed the motifs of rest and homeland to elucidate the nature of the promise which God has given to his people. These themes, on the one hand, refer strongly to the location where the future promise will be inherited, namely, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. This is the ultimate location of promise, both part of the promise and where it will be experienced in its fulness. The promise thus also includes rest from struggle and hope of belonging in a true homeland.

Another key motif in Hebrews which also relates in some way to the idea of promise is that of perfection. We have already mentioned a possible relationship between this theme and the 'present' aspect of entrance into rest. From 11:39-40, it is clear that perfection is related to the promise, for the author explicitly connects the perfection of believers to the eschatological promise in these verses. After the author has used the cloud of witnesses in chapter 11 to exhort the recipients to faithfulness, he brings the chain of witnesses to a climax by noting that, 'these all ... did not receive the promise, since God foresaw something better relative to us, that they might not be perfected without us.' The parallelism between promise and perfection demonstrates that the two are

closely related. At the very least, these verses imply that perfection is a necessary prerequisite for the reception of the promise, if not a part of the promise. This inference is confirmed in 12:22f in the reference to the heavenly city. There it is mentioned that in addition to the heavenly Jerusalem, the recipients have also come to 'the souls of righteous ones who have been perfected' (12:23). A close connection thus exists between reception of the promise and perfection. An examination of perfection language in the epistle, therefore, is necessary for a thorough understanding of the promise motif.

The meaning of τελειόω and its derivatives in Hebrews has long been a matter of debate, and a number of possible interpretations have been presented over the years.[31] Alternatives which have been put forward have varied from a 'formal' or 'general' reading of the terms, letting each particular context determine the precise meaning,[32] to 'religious' and 'cultic' interpretations,[33] to readings which associate perfection with death or a rational ascent to the noumenal realm.[34] Although there may be interesting overtones or parallels in

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[31]For a full discussion of the issues involved, see D. Peterson's *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982). For a brief, but very helpful summary of the options, see Attridge, *Hebrews* 83-87.

[32]E.g. J. Kögel, 'Der Begriff τελειοῦν im Hebräerbrief im Zusammenhang mit dem neutestamentlichen Sprachgebrauch', *Theologische Studien für M. Kähler* (Leipzig, 1905) 37-68. Others who have at least used this as a starting point include Peterson himself, *Perfection* 46f; M. Rissi, *Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs*, WUNT 41 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987) 79; J. M. Scholar, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTS 49 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991) 195; and M. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTS 73 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992) 102.

[33]Peterson, *Perfection* 4-5, 25-26, speaks of Michel's 'religious' reading of τελειόω in the light of LXX usage, interpreting perfection as a person's whole position before God (i.e. consecration — 'Die Lehre von der christlichen Vollkommenheit nach der Anschauung des Hebräerbriefes', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 106 [1934-5] 337f; Peterson points out that such a use is actually quite limited in the LXX). T. Häring, 'Über einige Grundgedanken des Hebräerbriefs', *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 17 (1920-1) 260-76, on the other hand, was the first proponent of a reading of Hebrews in the light of a cultic reading. Such a reading is often seen in relation to the cultic expression 'מלא ידיד', which is sometimes translated with 'τελειόω' in the expression 'to fill the hands' (in Exod. 29:9, 29, 33, 35; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; Num. 3:3). Peterson, *Perfection* 26-30, and Attridge, *Hebrews* 85, both point out that it is the phrase *as a whole* which has become a technical term. The single instance where the verb is used by itself with such a consecratory meaning (Lev. 21:10) is meagre evidence on which to base such an interpretation. Scholer, *Priests* 190, also points out that this is only one of the many uses of τελειόω in the LXX and that 'the cultic consecratory character of τελειοῦν is not grounded in the word itself, but in the context in which the word is situated'. Scholer, *Priests* 191, has also argued that 'even the staunchest advocates of "consecration" have had to elaborate their positions, while clinging to the concept itself.' The result, in his opinion, is that they have come closer and closer to the formal usage of the word group without realising or acknowledging that such was the case.

[34]Although no scholar would place an *exclusive* association of perfection in Hebrews with death, the usage in the background literature (e.g. Wis. 4:13; 4 Macc. 7:15; *Leg. All.* 3.45) is often considered to be relevant to the discussion (e.g. Attridge, *Hebrews* 85-86 and Peterson, *Perfection* 26, 30). L. K. K. Dey is the name most associated with the philosophical reading of perfection in Hebrews in which even for

Hebrews to these various usages of the language elsewhere, David Peterson and others are correct methodologically to begin their investigations of Hebrews with the formal definition of 'to complete'[35] or 'ans Ziel bringen',[36] allowing the epistle itself to delimit the meaning of the terms in their own contexts and in the light of the particular 'goals' in question. This approach is quickly vindicated by the observation that the author can speak of the perfection of Christ and the perfection of the sons, as well as of the possibility of being 'τέλειος' (seemingly in the sense of maturity — 6:14) and of the heavenly tent being 'more perfect' (9:11). Each of these usages has a different specific content when applied to a particular context. In each case, perfection implies something different on the level of specificity.

The perfection of Christ, for example, seems to be different in significant ways from that of the other sons. He is perfected through sufferings (2:10; 5:8-9), while the children are perfected through Christ himself (10:14). These different pathways to perfection reflect the seemingly different connotations the word group has in each specific case. Christ's perfection, on the one hand, seems to involve the attainment of suitability for his office as high priest.[37] After he has learned obedience through suffering, he is able to become a cause of eternal salvation, since he has been perfected (5:8-9). Associated with this is Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God, the attainment of glory and honour, for this is the context of 2:10.[38] Since Christ is 'without sin' (4:15), this is not a

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Christ perfection is access *in this life* to the noumenal world, *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLDS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975) 219 and *passim*.

[35]*Perfection* 46f.

[36]E. g. Rissi, *Theologie* 79, and Scholer, *Priests* 190-91.

[37]So Attridge, *Hebrews* 86, 'Christ's perfecting, as developed in the text, may be understood as a vocational process by which he is made complete or fit for his office'. So also G. Vos, 'The Priesthood of Christ', *PTR* 5 (1907) 589; Kögel, 'τελειοῦν' 61; J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924) 31-32; W. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951) 101, 110; P. DuPlessis, ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ: *The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1959) 218; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 43-44; Peterson, *Perfection* 66f; R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, New Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 56-57; W. Lane (although he believes the cultic interpretation forms the background of the usage), *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical (Dallas: Word Books, 1991) 57-58; and others.

[38]In the light of the fact that Christ's vocation is as a *heavenly* high priest (8:4), the exaltation is a necessary prerequisite for functioning in this office. Peterson, *Perfection* 104f, agrees that the exaltation is a part of Christ's perfection, as does Rissi, *Theologie* 79: 'Der Christus ist von Gott an das ihm von Gott verordnete Ziel geführt worden, das in seiner Verherrlichung im himmlischen Allerheiligsten besteht.' It should be noted that many conflicting interpretations of perfection language in Hebrews include Christ's exaltation and glorification in some way as a part of his perfection, as in Kögel, 'τελειοῦν' 67-68; E. Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, RK (Leipzig, 1913) 47 n. 20; Käsemann, *Wandering* 141; Rissi, *Theologie* 79; and Scholer, *Priests* 196. Dey, *Patterns* 219, is one of the few who actually excludes the exaltation from what it means for Christ to be perfected.

bringing to moral perfection and Christ does not need atonement, although his perfection does involve struggle and development, as 5:7-8 indicate.[39] On the contrary, it is because Christ was definitively without sin at the point of his death and proved to be obedient to God in suffering that he was able to be a priest 'perfected forever' (7:28). His definitive moral uprightness, including his obedient suffering of death, 'completes' his preparation for office and constitutes in part his qualifications as a heavenly high priest.

The people of God, on the other hand, are not able to access the heavenly realm on the basis of their own lives. The Law and the Levitical priesthood were also inadequate in this regard, for they were not able to 'perfect' those who turned to them for atonement (7:11, 19). They were not able to perfect the worshipper with respect their sense of having sin (9:9; 10:1).[40] Christ, on the other hand, with one sacrifice perfected forever those who are being sanctified (10:14). Here it is clear that, for believers, perfection involves atonement and cleansing (rather than suffering) at least as a pre-requisite and is related in some way to the attainment of acceptability with God and, as a result, legitimate access to his presence.[41]

What begins to emerge as one sifts through the vast literature on perfection language in Hebrews is that, while interpreters differ widely on the precise contours of the definition or overarching nuance of the word group, there is a great deal of agreement on those factors which are at least related to or involved in perfection, as well as on the matter of method in approaching the subject. There is a growing number of scholars, for example, who agree that the terms should be approached initially with a 'formal' or 'general' sense of 'completion' or of 'bringing to a goal', filling in the precise content in each context.[42] In addition, it is largely agreed that perfection for Christ *involves* suffering, exaltation, and vocational qualification.[43] Finally, most scholars would

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[39]So Peterson, *Perfection* 66, 98, who also mentions Riggenbach, *Hebräer* 136, and O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959) 97.

[40]See below, n. 54.

[41]Regardless of which interpretation is taken of perfection language in general, virtually all interpreters would agree that access to God's presence is involved in what it means for a believer to be perfected, whether it be actual entry into heaven itself, e.g. Kögel, 'τελειοῦν' 56; Käsemann, *Wanderings* 141; W. R. G. Loader, *Sohn und Hoherpriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefes*, WMANT 53 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1981) 45; and Isaacs, *Space* 103; or access to heaven while on earth (the majority of scholars).

[42]See above, n. 32.

[43]Not all scholars are agreed on all of these as a *part* of perfection. Suffering, for example, does seem to be the process *through which* Christ is perfected (2:10), a pre-requisite for perfection rather than perfection itself. We have claimed above that this process qualifies Christ for high priesthood, both in terms of the ability he gains to sympathise with our weaknesses and in that he undergoes this

acknowledge that perfection for believers *involves* a cleansing of sins and is related in some way to access into the heavenly realm, whether it be actual entry into heaven or access while on earth.[44]

What is needed, however, is movement toward consensus on how these particulars might relate to the general meaning of completeness or, in the absence of such, an agreement that no overarching pattern exists. On the one hand, it is difficult to conceive that there is not a more general relation between the perfection of Christ and that of believers. Given the pervasive presence of perfection language throughout the epistle, it is simply untenable to hold that the author does not in some way connect the main usages together with some more general 'connotation', even if he were to have done so unconsciously. This fact is even more obvious when it is noted that every explicit instance of perfection language applies to some entity within the new covenant. The author does not use perfection language to speak of anything outside the new covenant and the new age.[45]

Such an observation has led S. G. Sowers to write that 'applied perfection means, *the bringing to completion in the new covenant of that which was anticipated in the old.*'[46] Similarly, Moses Silva sees the 'concrete designation' of the term in Hebrews in reference to Christ as 'the fulfillment of the promise', the eschatological exaltation of Christ.[47] These comments are moving in the right direction because they note that on a more general level, perfection really pertains only to entities within the new covenant. If by these statements Sowers and Silva mean to imply that, in general, realities within the new covenant can be said to be perfect in contrast to the 'imperfect' items of the old covenant and that these new age entities are 'complete' in some sense in contrast to the

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suffering without sinning (4:15), rather learning obedience (5:8 — see above, pp. 96-97). We have mentioned that most scholars see Christ's perfection proper as including his entrance into the heavenly realm (see above, n. 38) and that a vast number see it as principally involving Christ's attainment of his high priestly office (see above, n. 37).

[44]See above, n. 41.

[45]Although τελειότερος in 9:11 might be taken to imply that the earthly tent was 'perfect' in some way, the word seems to mean little more than 'better', as M. Dibelius, 'Der himmlische Kultus nach dem Hebräerbrief', *Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Studien*, vol. 2: *Zum Urchristentum und zur hellenistischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. by G. Bornkamm and H. Kraft (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1956), and Scholer, *Priests* 186, have noted. If a general 'connotation' for perfection language can be established, however, then the use of τέλειος here may also be due to the association of the heavenly tent with perfection.

[46]*Hermeneutics* 113 (italics his), mentioning also J. Van der Ploeg as one who takes the same line of interpretation, 'L'exégèse de l'Ancien Testament dans l'épître aux Hébreux, *RB* (1947) 189.

[47]'Perfection and Eschatology in Hebrews', *WTJ* 39 (1976) 67.

'incomplete' aspects of the old age, then Sowers and Silva have hit upon an important dimension to perfection language in Hebrews.[48]

The notion that perfection language in Hebrews entails some sort of relationship to heavenly realities also has a strong claim. John M. Scholer has written, 'τελειοῦν serves to describe the "attaining to the goal", which is the direct presence of God.'[49] As such, Scholer sees the perfection of Christ as his entry into the heavenly holy of holies[50] and the perfection of believers as that 'present access to God's heavenly sanctuary which they enjoy already, not at some future point when they die.'[51] Marie Isaacs, similarly viewing perfection as attainment to the heavenly realm, goes so far as to deny perfection to believers until they actually enter into the heavenly city. In the present it can only be experienced by believers 'proleptically'.[52]

Once again, these analyses have much to commend them because they have noted that, whatever perfection might be, it usually implies some change of relation with the heavenly realm. Even if perfection were possible for believers while upon the earth, this would be true in general because they are tying into heavenly realities in some way. Such a thesis will cohere with our analysis of body and spirit in the next chapter.[53]

There are serious objections, however, to a view which sees perfection exclusively as reaching the presence of God, attaining the 'spatial' goal of heaven. Similarly, perfection cannot be said always to involve the heavenly realm. Three instances in Hebrews make this point clear. First, with regard to the perfection of Christ in 7:28, Christ is said to have been perfected forever in contrast to the high priests 'who have weakness'. It is difficult to see how access to the heavenly realm contrasts here with weakness. It is not the location of Christ which is the point of contrast but rather the fact that he is not weak like the earthly high priests. To restrict the proper meaning of perfection to access seems to miss the real point of the verse.

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[48]I suspect, however, that they have slightly skewed their interpretations by claiming that in *specific* occurrences of perfection language in Hebrews, the items are considered perfect because they are the complete forms of their old covenant counterparts. As the preceding arguments should confirm, the specific meanings of perfection when used in the epistle must always be determined in the light of what 'completion' would mean for that particular entity, not in terms of its old covenant counterpart.

[49]*Priests* 200, following in general the suggestions of Rissi, *Theologie* 79, 102-3.

[50]*Priests* 196.

[51]*Priests* 200.

[52]*Space* 102-3.

[53]See chapter 4, pp. 130-35.

Another instance where a 'spatial' meaning seems unlikely is in 9:9 and the parallel statement in 10:1. In 9:9 it is stated that the gifts and sacrifices of the earthly tabernacle are not able to 'perfect' the worshipper 'κατὰ συνείδησιν'. 10:2 elaborates on this claim by noting that if these sacrifices had been able to 'perfect' those who offered them, such a practice would have stopped, 'since the worshippers would have no longer have had any consciousness of sins'.[54] Rather, they would have been cleansed once (and for all). In these verses, 'to perfect those who approach' (10:1) seems to be parallel to 'the worshippers once having been cleansed' (10:2). On the one hand, the completeness involved in perfection is clear from the fact that if perfection had been possible, they would have been able to stop offering sacrifices. Perfection in this verse, therefore, involves the accomplishment of cleansing rather than the reaching of a destination. The parallelism of perfecting with the cleansing of the worshipper is also striking. These verses, while certainly implying access to the heavenly realm in the theology of the epistle, do not in these instances speak of perfection in any such terms.

Probably the clearest use of perfection language which in reality excludes the 'spatial' reading is in 12:2. Here, that which is perfected is 'the faith'. This 'faith' refers to all those elements involved in the author's understanding of God's purposes in salvation history through Christ. Such an entity cannot enter into the heavenly realm, for it is an abstract term rather than a person. In this verse more than any other, the formal definition of perfection reasserts itself.

The problem in fact with most of the attempts to generalise on the particular meaning of perfection language in Hebrews seems to be that they do not take the 'formal' use of τελειόω seriously enough, even if they profess to start with this sense as a heuristic approach to the epistle. Scholer's comment on those who read perfection as 'consecration' eventually applies to his own interpretation as well: to fit all of the occurrences into a certain mould, scholars 'have had to elaborate their positions, while clinging to the concept itself',[55] whatever it might be. In the end, it must simply be admitted that the particular kind of perfection in each instance varies depending on the entity in question. There is always the idea of 'bringing to the appropriate goal' or 'completedness' in mind, but there is not one specific goal in each case. For each kind of item, there is its own appropriate 'completeness'.

What has often been overlooked, however, is the standard by which each of these 'goals' or the 'appropriate completedness' is judged. Without question,

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[54]Since συνείδησις is parallel to ἀνάμνησις in verse 3, it must mean something like 'consciousness' rather than 'conscience'. See chapter 4, n. 30.

[55]*Priests* 191.

when each particular instance comes within the purview of the author's theological system, that standard is the purpose which God has intended for that particular item in the plan of salvation history. *In Hebrews, something can be said to be perfected when it has attained its appropriate status within the purposes of God.*[56] Such a state can only be attained within the new covenant and inevitably will pertain to the heavenly realm, since that realm alone is the *telos* for the people of God in the epistle's eschatology.[57] In every relevant instance in Hebrews, perfection is the attainment of God's intended destiny and is thus to reach true rest and finality. The verb τελειόω or the nouns τελείωσις and τελειωτής, therefore, refer either to bringing some entity into its destined state of completedness or to the attainment of such a state.[58] The relevant connotations of such a 'perfection' will follow in each particular context.

The preceding indicates both why the author can use perfection language parallel to so many different items and why so many different interpretations of this language have been propounded. In terms of Christ, the goal is high priesthood in heaven and the atonement which follows. In the theology of the author, this requires that Christ die without sin, although having been tempted in every way like those for whom he is atoning. It is appropriate, therefore, for God to bring Christ to this point through suffering (2:10) so that he can become a cause of eternal salvation (5:9). His perfected high priesthood lasts forever because perfection is by definition final, and it attains God's high standard because Christ was without weakness (7:28).

With reference to the sons, the Law (7:19) and Levitical priesthood (7:11) were not able to bring them to the final and appropriate state of cleansedness once and for all (9:9; 10:1-2). Under the Levitical system, their consciences

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[56]For the author, this 'appropriate status' would have probably been rather obvious. To him, therefore, the meaning of perfection in each case would be fairly self-evident and would not require my more methodical inquiry in each case as to what would be the proper status of each item within God's purposes.

[57]See chapter 4, p. 125-28, 133.

[58]It should be noted that this connotation does not really apply to the two occurances of τέλειος in the epistle (5:14; 9:11) nor to the one instance of τελειότης in 6:1. These words are used in different senses. Τελειότερος in 9:11, for example, means little more than 'better' (see above, n. 45), while the uses of 'perfect' and 'perfection' in 5:14 and 6:1 could just as well be translated 'mature' and 'maturity'. Although in each case these words are indeed associated with the new covenant and the appropriate in God's purposes, the latter two in particular reflect a rather widespread use of paideutic language in the literature of the period. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 3:1; 14:20; Eph. 4:13f.; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; Epict. *Enchir.* 51; and numerous examples in Philo (e.g. *Agr.* 9; *Cong.* 18f; *Prob.* 160), although these are developed along quite different lines from Hebrews (see R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ALGHJ 4 [Leiden: Brill, 1970] 277-308). For more general discussions of this type of 'paideutic' language, see Moffatt, *Hebrews* 71, and Attridge, *Hebrews* 161-63. J. Thompson's treatment is less helpful in *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982) 17-40.

always remembered their sins (10:2), and thus never could have a recognition of having been sanctified with any sense of finality. With one sacrifice, however, Christ brought them into this appropriate state in relation to God forever (10:14). Within God's purposes, this cleansing would only take place in the new covenant; therefore, the great cloud of the faithful could not be brought to this state apart from those living in the eschatological age (11:40). All of these spirits who in the new age finally have access to heaven, the place of final rest, have reached their God-destined state of cleansedness (and, in the end, glory and honour) and can thus be considered to be 'perfected' (12:23). Since Christ has brought all this about, he can be said to be the 'perfector' of the faith (12:2), for he has brought this same faith to its appropriate and finished state in relation to God, and he now sits at the right hand of God.

This understanding of the perfection motif, therefore, accounts for all of the relevant occurrences in the epistle, while also accounting for interpretations of perfection language which have focused on one or another of the many pertinent aspects of God's intended destiny for Christ and his people. It also ties into the images of promise which we have looked at thus far. It is clear, for example, that the author's use of perfection language ties in well with the notion of entrance into rest. For Christ or believers to reach their completed state is for them to attain a kind of rest and finality of state. The forever perfected Christ sits at the right hand of God. As David M. Hay has pointed out, while Ps. 110:1 is cited with different emphases throughout Hebrews, the allusion in 10:12 focuses 'on the fact that he sits'.[59] Christ's perfection, involving his once and for all sacrifice and its strong emphasis on its finality, is clearly reminiscent of attaining rest.[60]

In the same vein, believers are exhorted to 'rest' from their works, as God himself rested from his works (4:10). God is thus also at rest in his 'realm of perfection', and the perfected believer has (ideally) reached a point of final cleansing and access into the heavenly realm. In a sense, Isaacs is right to say that believers can only be considered to be perfected on this earth 'proleptically',[61] for while they can be said to have already come to 'the spirits of just ones having been perfected', this state of perfection is provisional upon them holding their faith firm until the end (3:14). On the other hand, the cleansing which is the most important component of perfection for believers, can

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[59]*Glory* 87-88.

[60]Although Christ has completed the sacrifice, he must technically wait for his 'enemies' to be put under his feet until he can be completely at rest (10:13).

[61]*Space* 102-3.

be considered as already accomplished (e.g. 10:22), and the author can use the perfect tense in stating that believers have already come to the realm of perfected spirits (12:23), adding a strong present dimension to perfection. Like the rest of God, therefore, perfection is primarily future, while having a strong present aspect and implication.

Perfection language also ties into the promised land motif. As we have noted, the association of access to heaven and perfection has seemed so apparent in the epistle that it has led some to see 'entrance into heaven' as the essence of what it means to be perfected.[62] As we shall see in chapter 4, this is because the earthly realm is transitory and will eventually be removed.[63] The heavenly sphere, therefore, is the only possible realm for the true perfection of a person, for perfection intrinsically implies finality. The perfected Christ, therefore, enters into heaven, while the cleansed spirits of believers have present access to heaven through Christ and will eventually be part of the heavenly assembly in the city of the living God.

In the end, therefore, there is a strong link between promise and perfection in Hebrews. Since perfection is the attainment of God's destined purpose for humanity, it has exactly the same content as that which God has promised. God's promise, in effect, includes all those things which are involved in being perfected. As a result, the content of God's promise to his people includes a final cleansing from sin and definitive access to his presence. This similarity between promise and perfection also explains why the author is not wholly consistent in his use of the singular and plural for promise, for *the* promise, so to speak, involves many promises.[64]

4. Integrating the motifs

The attainment of glory and honour in victory over death, coming salvation, the rest of God, land of promise, and perfection motifs account for most of the language of promise in the epistle. As we have gone along, we have attempted to integrate them with one another. We saw, for example, that both the future rest of God and the place of true perfection relate to the heavenly realm and that this location embodies practically the whole of the promise. We saw that the present ability to be cleansed was also an important part of perfection and thus a

[62]See above, p. 101 and n. 41.

[63]See chapter 4, p. 123-30.

[64]See above, n. 20.

part of the promise as well. These images account for most of what the author includes in the content of the promise.

We have also noted that perfection is only possible in the new age under the new covenant.[65] This observation serves to launch us into a broader perspective on what the promise language of the epistle is really about. Primarily, there is a real continuity among the people of God under both covenants. The cloud of witnesses in chapter 11 all died without having received the promises (11:39), because God 'foresaw' something better, namely, to perfect all believers through Christ in the new age. This 'waiting' of the Old Testament saints implies a plan on God's part, a continuity in salvation history between the old age and the new. Since Enoch, Abraham and the patriarchs, Sarah, Moses — in short, all those examples of faithfulness in the first 29 verses of chapter 11 — since all of these lived before Israel failed to enter into rest (3:7-11) and did not remain in God's first covenant (8:9), one can assume that it was not the failure of the wilderness generation or of Israel at any other time that brought about some *ad hoc* addition of God's second covenant. Rather, the implication is that God had planned all along to perfect his people through Christ. When we come to discuss the correspondence between the old cultus and Christ, this fact will come even more clearly into focus.

The promise remaining for the people of God, therefore, is an eschatological promise, one made as a part of God's overall plan for salvation history but reserved for 'these last days'. As Käsemann pointed out long ago, 4:2 and 6 virtually equate the reception of God's promise with the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι,[66] indicating that promise is in fact an overarching category for the author. The message of God to his 'people' both then and now is really the very same promise, although for the wilderness generation the hearing of it was not mixed with faith. God never intended to give the promise through Joshua, for if he had, he would not have spoken of another day (4:8).[67] Even when it is not explicitly mentioned, it can be assumed that the author of Hebrews is always thinking in terms of a plan in the mind of God. God has planned and promised

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[65]Käsemann, *Wandering* 30, has noted that in 8:6, the new covenant is said to have been enacted on the basis of 'better promises', confirming the close relationship between promise language and the new covenant, particularly n. 23.

[66]*Wandering* 19, 26. So also Rose, 'Verheißung' 186.

[67]The people of God are destined to receive these promises as 'heirs'. Repeatedly throughout the epistle, the notion of inheritance is joined to that of promise (6:12, 17; 9:15; 11:9). This fact indicates that the people of God receive the promises as sons and children of God, as seed of Abraham. The connection between sonship and inheritance thus is that of those who have been perfected to that which is promised to them. Technically, of course, such sonship and heirship was not possible until the sacrifice of Christ, meaning that the faithful in the old age had to wait (11:39-40).

from the very beginning a new covenant which will bring finality and perfection to his purposes in the world. The motif of promise, therefore, implicitly stands in the background of all the different contrasts of the book, providing continuity to the plot of salvation history.

The content of God's promise to his people in Hebrews, therefore, is none other than all that is associated with salvation. It is, first of all, that perfection which God effects through Christ, the setting of the one who believes in a proper relationship with God through cleansing, resulting in access to the heavenly realm. This perfection will of course be 'complete' when the people of God find their rest in that heavenly homeland, the lasting city prepared for them, and thus when they will attain the 'glory and honour' promised in Ps. 8 in victory over death. This promise did not arise haphazardly, but has a constant place in the salvific purpose of God, who foresaw that it would be best to perfect all the people of God with the one sacrifice of Christ.

B. The surety of God's promises

In conjunction with the finality of that perfection which is the destiny of the people of God, the author assures the recipients of his epistle that a promise of God is as certain as God's unchangeable purpose (6:17). This surety of God's promises is a key theme in the epistle and is used by the author to bolster the confidence of his hearers in that which is presently unseen. It is a part of a pervasive motif in Hebrews which associates surety and certainty with the new covenant and its components. The old covenant was always intended to be temporary, while the new represents the final goal toward which all of salvation history has been moving.

The certainty of God's promise is especially the topic of discussion in 6:13-20 and 7:20-28. In the first instance, God's promises to Abraham are used to demonstrate his trustworthiness in keeping promises in general. The author has issued in the preceding context a rather strict warning to his audience, encouraging them to demonstrate diligence in working 'toward certainty of hope until the end, so that you are not sluggish, but imitators of the ones who inherit the promises through faith and patience' (6:11-12). He thus anticipates the exhortation which he will make in chapter 11 via the 'cloud of witnesses', implying that these same promises were also tendered to those who lived during the first covenant. The author then goes on to substantiate this paraenesis on the basis of the steadfastness of the promises of God. In this exhortation, Abraham is a primary example of God's trustworthiness, since after he had shown patience, he actually inherited the promise of blessing and of the multiplication

of his seed (6:14-15).[68] Abraham is thus an illustration of the certainty one can have when one has received a promise from God.

In his argument, the author offers to his audience 'two unchangeable things' which are meant to provide a 'strong encouragement' (6:18) to believe in the certainty of God's promise. What these two are specifically, however, is a matter of debate amongst scholars. While there is some agreement that the two things are 'the promise of God and his oath',[69] there is less agreement on to which promise and oath the author refers.

The first 'unchangeable thing', on the one hand, seems to be a reference to 'τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ' (6:17). Not only is this the only other use of ἀμετάθετος in the context, it is in fact the only other instance of the adjective in Hebrews as a whole. Since the 'unchangeableness of his will' is being shown to the 'heirs of the promise', it seems clear that God's will is to be identified with his promise. The majority of commentators are thus correct to see God's promise as the first unchangeable thing.

By stating that this 'will' or 'purpose' of God is unchanging, the author indicates that God's will for the salvation of his hearers does not and will not change (an implicit affirmation that both the old and the new covenants were a part of the constant purpose of God).[70] The recipients of the epistle can therefore be assured that God's promise has not and will not change. The context of this statement is the promise of blessing to Abraham, cited in 6:14. Since this is both the only promise and the only oath in the context, it seems likely that this is the immediate reference. The only other mention of promise in the epistle up to this point is the promise of rest in 4:1, so one must presume that one hearing the epistle read would think first of the Abraham promise.[71]

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[68]As we have noted (see above, p. 96), in working toward a different purpose, the author claims that Abraham died without having received the promise of a homeland in 11:13.

[69]Lane, *Hebrews* 152. Others who take this position include Michel, *Hebräer* 253; O. Kuss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, RNT 8/1 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1966) 84; H. Köster, 'Die Auslegung der Abraham-Verheissung in Hebräer 6', *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferung: Festschrift für Gerhardt von Rad*, edited by R. Rendtorff and K. Koch (Neukirchen: Moers, 1961) 100; O. Hofius, 'Die Unabänderlichkeit des göttlichen Heilsratschlusse: Erwägungen zur Herkunft eines neutestamentlichen Theologumenon', *ZNW* 64 (1973) 135-36; and Attridge, 'God's word and the oath that confirms it' — *Hebrews* 181.

[70]We have already mentioned that the promise seems to have been tendered to many of the fathers who lived before the rebellion of Israel. The following section on 'typology' in the epistle will make it even clearer that God always had the two covenants in mind as part of his βουλή.

[71]This fact may be an indication that the recipients of the epistle were Jewish.

The author clearly has a greater promise in mind, however, namely, the promise of a new covenant and of the sacrifice of Christ.[72] Bertold Klappert has pointed out the parallel elements in Heb. 6:13ff and 7:19ff.[73] The similarities are great enough to conclude that this is the direction in which the author is headed in chapter 6. The ultimate promise about which the author wishes to give assurance is the promise that Christ would be the final means of atonement. It is clear in the epistle as a whole that this is what the author believes really provides 'strong encouragement' (6:18) and an anchor, secure and entering inside the veil (6:19). This surety is the 'entrance of a better hope' (7:19) based on better promises (8:6).[74]

The second unchangeable thing is clearly the oath which God has made, given indisputable authenticity by the fact that God cannot lie (6:18).[75] Again, the immediate context speaks of the oath which God made to Abraham, but since the author will refer to an even more important oath in 7:21, it seems very likely that he had it in mind as well. This oath is the appointment of Christ as a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Levitical priests never received such an oath, for their ministry was always destined to be temporary (7:20). Christ's high priesthood, on the other hand, was promised with an oath and therefore cannot fail to come to pass and last forever. Unchangeable things such as this stand as affirmations of the certainly which the new covenant brings and of the constant purpose of God in salvation history.

The oath of God is not the only means the author uses to bolster the confidence of the recipients of the letter in the surety of God's promise and plan. The epistle is replete with the motif of certainty in the new covenant, a surety which is expressed in terms which imply that it was always a constant part of his purpose. Just within the context of 6:13-20, two occurences from the βεβαι- word group appeared. In 6:16, for example, the author claims that oaths always

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[72]So A. Seeberg, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KNT (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1912) 71f; P. Andriessen and A. Lenglet, *De Brief aan de Hebreeën* (Roermond: Roman and Zonen, 1971) 104f; H. Köster, 'Auslegung' 105-8; B. Klappert, *Die Eschatologie des Hebräerbriefs*, (Munich: Kaiser, 1969) 27-28; Attridge, *Hebrews* 182; and Lane, *Hebrews* 152. Moffatt disagrees, believing the oath in chapter 6 to be the promise to Abraham of blessing and multiplication, *Hebrews* 88; as also H. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Black, 1964) 115.

[73]*Eschatologie* 32.

[74]Once again, the author does have a uniform use of promise language. The promises of the new covenant are clearly better than those of the old. The fact that both ages seem to have certain promises should not lead one to the conclusions that the promise of the new covenant was not given long before the new age was inaugurated. As I have just argued, even when the author is speaking of heirs and promise in chapter 6, he is really thinking about Christ and the new covenant.

[75]The importance which the author attaches to oaths is intriguing and is attested widely in the literature. See especially Hofius, 'Unabänderlichkeit' 137-145.

come at the end of a dispute, leading 'εἰς βεβαίωσιν'. Similarly in 6:19 the hope of the believer is βεβαίαν and ἀσφαλῆ, not least because it has entered 'within the veil'.

These are of course not the only occurences of the word group in the epistle. In 2:2 the word of the Law delivered through angels is said to have been 'βέβαιος', indicating that the former covenant was also in the plan of God. The new revelation is even more significant and was also 'confirmed' by those who first heard the Lord (2:3). In 3:6 and 14 the recipients are encouraged to hold the substance of their faith 'firm' until the end, and in 13:9 they are told that it is good for their hearts 'to be established' by God's grace. Finally, in 9:17 the author states on general principle that a will becomes secure when the testator has died. In Christ's death, therefore, there is ultimate certainty given to atonement.[76]

Another word which appears several times in the epistle which lends security to the promise is the word μένω. Christ, thus, is twice said in chapter 7 to be a priest who remains forever (7:3, 24). This 'remaining' is clearly important in the author's theology, for he repeatedly notes in chapter 7 that a key to Christ's superior priesthood is the fact that he does not die (7:23) and lives (7:8). The priests are hindered by this 'weakness', but Christ has been perfected 'forever' (7:28 — by the 'word of the oath'!). The promised possession of those who are faithful is also a 'remaining possession' (10:34) and a 'lasting city' (13:14). Everything else, all that is 'shakeable', will eventually be removed, 'so that the unshakeable might remain' (12:27).[77] Here it is clear that the promise is certain because it will remain forever and is not destined to change or fade away.

More subtle, but of immense significance, is the logical terminology which permeates the epistle.[78] Πρέπω, for example occurs twice in the epistle, both of Christ as a 'fitting' high priest (7:26) and in reference to the appropriateness of perfecting Christ through suffering (2:10). Such references appeal to a certain intrinsic logic or *logos* in the world and to God's plan in salvation history. Similarly, δεῖ and ὀφείλω appear several times in the epistle. In 9:26, there is a necessity for atonement to cover the whole of history from the foundation of the world and Christ has to meet certain specifications in meeting this need, such as the obligation of being made like his brothers (2:17). There are also necessities

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[76]For a further discussion of this verse, see chapter 2, pp. 70-72.

[77]See chapter 4, p. 126-27.

[78]See especially W. C. Linss, 'Logical Terminology in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *CTM* 37 (1966) 365-69. J. Thompson presented a paper exploring the long history of such language in a paper read at S.B.L., 'The Impossible, the Necessary, and the Fitting: Logical Terminology in the Epistle to the Hebrews' (1995).

and impossibilities scattered through Hebrews.[79] All of these statements lend an underlying sense of certainty to God's purpose and promise in salvation history.

Hebrews, therefore, not only uses the hope of promised rest and a true homeland as a basis for exhorting his audience to hold fast and be faithful, but he also substantiates his admonitions with strong language of certainty and security. The promises were given with oaths and are thus unchangeable, for God cannot lie. Throughout the epistle the author repeatedly uses language which indicates the surety of the new covenant and of Christ as God's chosen means of salvation. Finally, language of necessity, impossibility, appropriateness, and endurance all indicate that the author has a strong sense of overall purpose to the creation and to salvation. We will return to this fact in the conclusion, after we have discussed the epistle's 'typological' language.

IV. *'Typology' in Hebrews*

The motif of promise and fulfilment is a strong indicator in the epistle of the continuity between the old and the new ages. It affirms, at the very least, that the promise was given to those living in the old age and that there were those within that epoch who were not only faithful but were in fact models for those who are fortunate enough to live in the age of the new covenant (6:12; chapter 11). 'We have been promised' an inheritance 'like them' (4:2) and the 'rest' which Joshua gave those of that day was not the true rest of God's promise (4:8). Even the patriarchs were seeking for a heavenly city, rather than an earthly land of promise (11:13-16).

In many respects, however, this continuity entailed in the promise motif is inferred from the text. The author is writing to persons living in the new age, and he is not directly concerned with the fate of those under the old covenant except as they provide encouragement to his present audience. A stronger indicator of the continuity between the old and new covenants comes from an examination of the way in which the author uses 'typology' to compare and contrast the two 'cults'. We have already discussed in the previous chapter the discontinuity between the Levitical cultus and the offering of Christ. We saw that the old cultus was 'weak and useless' (7:18) and played no role in the new means of atonement initiated by Christ 'on the basis of better promises' (8:6).

The discontinuity between the old and new is at times so starkly put that one might miss the important fact that the old cultus was always a part of God's

[79]Lehne, *Covenant* 154 n. 83, notes 5:3; 9:16, 23; 7:12; 8:3 for necessity and impossibilities occur in 6:4, 18; 10:4; and 11:6 (see also Caird, 'Method' 48f.).

overall plan in salvation history. This 'word spoken through angels' was βέβαιος, and every disobedience received its just punishment (2:2). Despite the inferior character of the event, it is no doubt assumed that God stood behind the deliverance of the Law and all of the fearful occurrences associated with it (12:18-21). It was God who spoke to his people during the old covenant through the prophets (1:1) and indeed through the Old Testament Scriptures for which Hebrews has such fondness.[80] In short, 'the old covenant was a valid revelation of God. It had been superseded and fulfilled but not abrogated. It contained a genuine foreshadowing of the good things to come, not a Platonic illusion of ultimate reality.'[81]

G. B. Caird penned these words over thirty-five years ago as he argued his thesis that the author did not view the old covenant as something feigning to be sufficient while in fact being a failure. Rather, the author's interest was 'in the confessed inadequacy of the old order.'[82] While one may wonder whether the author's feelings were stronger than his theology, it seems apparent that the author did believe the old covenant to have been a valid revelation instituted by God, as well as one which had finally reached the end of its purpose and was now destined to fade away.

Some of the strongest language supporting this thesis is that which has sometimes been taken as 'Platonic' or 'Philonic'. Vocabulary such as ὑπόδειγμα (8:5 and 9:23 in particular), σκία (8:5; 10:1), τύπος (8:5), εἰκών (10:1), and ἀντίτυπος (9:24) has often been taken as a straightforward indication of Platonic influence on the author.[83] More than any other person, Lincoln Hurst has attempted to address certain misconceptions about these terms.[84] He has argued convincingly, for example, that '[t]here is no instance in known Greek literature where ὑπόδειγμα can be demonstrated to mean

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[80]Lehne emphasises the continuity of God's speaking in history, as witnessed by the fact that the author uses the Old Testament Scriptures as if they are still a valid revelation (*Covenant* 11). Cf. also Vos, 'Priesthood' 629-30 and G. Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, SNTSMS 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 47.

[81]G. B. Caird, 'The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *CJT* 5 (1959) 46.

[82]'Method' 47.

[83]J. H. Burtness, for example, 'Plato, Philo and the Author of Hebrews', *LQ* 2 (1958) 58, wrote, 'there is no doubt but that he [the author] is using words which are *frequently used by Philo* and which seem to express the antithesis between heavenly realities and earthly copies' (quoted in Hurst, 'How "Platonic" Are Heb. viii.5 and ix.23f?', *JTS* 34 [1983] 156).

[84]Especially in 'How "Platonic"', 'Eschatology and "Platonism" in the Epistle to the Hebrews' *SBLSP* (1984) 41-74, and *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990) 7-42.

"copy"'.[85] The word usually signifies the '*basis* for imitation or instruction'[86] in conjunction with the idea of 'showing' present in the δείγμα word group. The Platonic and Philonic παράδειγμα, on the other hand, is not present in Hebrews, nor is the more typical word for 'copy', μίμημα, to be found in the epistle. These simple observations call for a more careful reading of these terms in the central section of Hebrews.[87]

Probably the most Platonic 'sounding' of all verses in the epistle is 8:5, where it is said that the earthly priests, 'by a shadowy illustration[88] serve the heavenly tabernacle, even as Moses has been instructed as he is about to erect the tent'.[89] Hebrews then cites Exodus 25: 'Be careful that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'[90] Hurst has attempted to shift the focus of interpretation from the idea of pattern to other components of the verse such as the mountain, the reference to 'all things', and the notion of showing.[91] In this attempt, he has tried to make out a case that the real key to the meaning of the verse is a supposed allusion to Ezekiel 42:15. This interpretation, however, is not convincing. Since the author will take up the 'type' or 'pattern' motif in 9:23-24 with the same basic language, it seems

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[85]*Background* 13.

[86]So Hurst, *Background* 13, citing E. Lee, 'Words Denoting "Pattern" in the New Testament', *NTS* 8 (1962) 167-9.

[87]For further discussions of this question, see chapter 5, p. 165 and Conclusion 2, p. 218-20.

[88]Hurst, *Background* 15-17, seems to prefer 'outline' as the best translation of ὑπόδειγμα, finding Moffatt's interpretation, *Hebrews* 105-6, of 'ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ' as a hendiadys for 'a shadowy outline' an acceptable translation if the phrase is emptied of Platonic meaning. Hurst suggests that the use of ὑπόδειγμα here is related to its occurance in Ez. 42:15, where it denotes the outline or outside perimeter of the temple. This meaning does not seem to fit easily into 8:5, however, regardless of the similar context. It seems much easier and more feasible to take the term in a similar sense to its use in 4:11. The earthly ministry was an example, an illustration of what the heavenly ministry of Christ would be like. Attridge, *Hebrews* 219 n. 41, takes ὑπόδειγμα to mean 'copy' in this verse, but this is equally unclear to me. A translation of the word as 'representation' would be acceptable and would fit with the fact that in a few instances Aquila translates ὁμοίωμα and ὁμοίωσις with ὑπόδειγμα, although 'likeness' is certainly a possible translation. On the basis of my exegesis of 10:1 below and also of 8:5 and 9:23 in chapter 5 (pp. 166-67, 169-70), I choose to render it primarily as 'illustration' (although see chapter 5, n. 120), which shifts the emphasis slightly to the more normal meaning of showing and pointing to something else.

[89]The use of the perfect tense here is striking and indicates that the author is interpreting Scripture. So also Attridge, *Hebrews* 220 n. 46: 'The perfect tense is used here in the exegetical context.'

[90]The verse seems to be an amalgam of 25:40 (25:39 LXX) and the 'all' from 25:9. It is perhaps significant that the author tends toward 25:40 rather than 25:9, which has the more Platonic παράδειγμα. If the author is Platonist in tendency, he is not demonstrating this very well.

[91]*Background* 15f.

beyond doubt that it is the pattern-τύπος aspect of the Exodus citation which is most important for the author.[92]

The general relationship between old and new is perhaps best illustrated by the correspondance between 9:11 and 10:1. The latter verse states that 'the Law, having a shadow of good things to come, but not itself being the image of those things, ... is never able to perfect those who approach [God through it].' Probably the most important aspect of this verse to note is that *the relation between shadow and image is first and foremost a temporal one.* The Law, in the past, is a shadow of the good things in the future.

This temporal priority in the verse creates a substantial problem for those who have read 10:1 Platonically. The Law is not said to have had a shadow of something in heaven, as if referring to some Platonic form. Indeed there is no indication given that the reality to which it pointed even existed at the time of its institution (although we believe it did). Rather, those repeatedly offered sacrifices which the Law did 'have' (10:1b) referred to something which was to come, namely, *an event in salvation history.*

This reading of 10:1 is substantiated by a comparison with 9:11, where Christ is said to be 'a high priest of good things *having come to be*'.[93] The Law had a shadow of good things to come; Christ is the high priest of good things accomplished. This correspondance fits in well with the theology of the epistle, as we have demonstrated repeatedly in the previous chapter. Christ is consistently contrasted with the Law as the new covenant equivalent of the Levitical cultus (e.g. 7:11 vs. 8:6). The shadow language thus exists on the level of event and not in terms of entities. It would thus be impossible to see this as a Platonic or straightforwardly Philonic contrast, for events do not have Platonic forms.

A further complication for those who would wish to read 10:1 Platonically is the contrast of σκιά with εἰκών. Hurst has pointed out that in Plato the εἰκών is associated with the earthly copies rather than the heavenly realities.[94] While Philo can refer to the *logos* as an εἰκών because it is an intermediate entity between God and the material realm,[95] any kind of straightforward Philonic

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[92]As we will argue in chapter 5 (pp. 166-67, 169-70), however, the author may not always have a rigid correspondence between the heavenly 'type' and the earthly 'antitype' in mind. If this is the case, the Platonic reading loses more and more ground.

[93]There is a textual variant of roughly equal manuscript support with the reading μελλόντων here instead of γενομένων. Since the author emphasises the completed aspect of Christ's high priesthood (e.g. 9:26; 10:12-14), however, the latter is more likely.

[94]*Background* 19.

[95]This is because Philo has a 'three-tiered' system, where the *logos* is both the εἰκών of the divine παράδειγμα and the model for the shadowy, earthly copies (e.g. *Leg. All.* 3.95-96; *Som.* 1.79).

reading of the verse reeks havoc with the meaning. What are the 'good things' of which the cultic apparati of the Law were shadows and the heavenly things the image, or of which Christ was the image? The meaning of the verse becomes so obscure as to preclude it as a likelihood.[96]

There is a much more plausible understanding of the words which has not often been considered because of the prejudice to see these terms Platonically. What if the author merely wants to assert that the old covenant was only shadowy and did not even give a perfect picture of what the new covenant events would be like? The Law with its ministrations only had a shadow of coming good things accomplished in Christ; it did not reflect these things with a mirror image. We will suggest in chapter 5 that language of type, antitype, shadow, representation, in short all of these terms have been taken far more rigidly than the epistle actually requires in some places.[97] It has been presumed that the author has a fairly one to one correspondence in mind between the earthly cultus and the heavenly ministry. As we have even argued so far, however, this is not necessarily the case. The author is using a metaphor, and he is amalgamating all of the old in order to pit it against the one sacrifice in the new. The old foreshadows the new, but it does so in a shadowy, imperfect way.

The relationship between shadow/illustration and reality is therefore one of anticipation. The earthly cultus points toward the heavenly one in a primarily temporal although also spatial scheme. The earthly cultus and tabernacle are indeed not the 'true' items but are only 'antitypes' of the heavenly realities (9:24). They are neither effective nor lasting. On the other hand, they served a valid function in pointing forward to the realities which were to come. Moses was indeed commanded to build the earthly tent, even if the structure did not truly make atonement possible. The earthly tabernacle has a 'parabolic' purpose (9:9) in teaching us about the true tent and the eternal sacrifice. All of these factors lead us to the conclusion that the old covenant was indeed God ordained and God given as a part of his plan. It was never meant to have any

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[96]I find the efforts of Vos to maintain a 'spatial' priority here valiant but inadequate, in *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 55-58. He suggests two explanations, the first of which comes from the sphere of art and the second from the sphere of philosophy. In the first, the Old Testament possesses the sketch and the New the true picture of the heavenly realities. In the second, he offers alternatively the idea that Christ is the reality come down from heaven, baldly asserting that εἰκών can mean 'archetype'. In my opinion, only an expansion of the preceding model holds any promise. Since Christ is the χαρακτήρ of God's substance (1:3), there is a vague possibility that there could be a modified Philonic pattern here after the three-level idea: God the heavenly substance, Christ the image, the Law having the shadow. Even if this were the case, the Philonism has been modified so much that it bears little resemblance to Philo himself.

[97]See above, notes 88 and 92. The presence of 'all' in the citation in 8:5 is the one place where one might argue a more rigid correspondence in reference to the tabernacle itself.

independent value, however. It was meant as an indication, an illustration of that which is to come.

When one speaks of a 'typology' in Hebrews, it is of course important to recognise that one cannot precisely speak of the old cultus or tabernacle as a 'type' of Christ or the heavenly tent. Such a manner of speaking would reverse the order and the significance. For Hebrews, the heavenly is the 'type' (8:5) and the earthly the 'antitype' (9:24).[98] The heavenly clearly has the priority in the plan of God. A picture forms in which it is clear that God always intended to save through Christ, even when he was instituting the earthly cultus and tabernacle.

V. *The* Logos *of God*

Isaacs has rightly criticised Graham Hughes and Ronald Williamson for seeing in Hebrews an 'all-but explicit Logos Doctrine' in reference to Christ.[99] This critique, however, does not preclude the existence of 'all-but explicit', in fact explicit, *logos* language in the epistle. The clearest incidence of such language occurs in 4:12-13 where the 'word' of God is likened to a sword in its ability to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The author's language here is reminiscent of Wisdom 18:15, where the all powerful word of God leaps from heaven wielding a sword, bearing God's authentic command. Hebrews thus knows to speak of the *logos* of God as the bearer of his command in accomplishing his will in judgement.

The author repeatedly uses 'word' imagery throughout the epistle, raising further suspicion that he has some sort of notion of a *logos* of God which functions on a broader level. God thus formerly *spoke* through the prophets, but recently he has *spoken* through a Son. Chapter 1 is replete with statements which God *says* either to the Son or the angels (1:5, 6, 7, 13). 2:2 speaks both of the λόγος which the angels had *spoken* and of that one (i. e. salvation) which began to be *spoken* by Christ. In the epistle, verses like 2:6; 3:5; 5:13; 6:1; 7:28; 12:19; and 13:7, to name only a few, demonstrate that the author links the speaking of God with authoritative revelation and the proper ordering of salvation history.

On the one hand, in none of the above instances, not even in 4:12-13, can one presume that the word spoken is Christ. Even in 1:2 God has spoken a word

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[98]This relation would seem to imply that the heavenly did exist at the time when the earthly was effected.

[99]*Space* 198f., arguing against Hughes, *Hermeneutics* 5 and Williamson, 'The Incarnation of the Logos in Hebrews', *ExpTim* 95 (1983) 4-8.

through him, but Christ is not equated with this word. Christ is, however, referred to in *logos* type language in 1:3, where he is deemed an ἀπαύγασμα of God's glory and a χαρακτήρ of his substance. The latter term in particular is reminiscent of Philo's use of *logos* language,[100] and the verse does seem to have overtones of Christ as the wisdom of God. One could reasonably suppose, therefore, that Christ is God's *logos par excellence.*

Whether the author has a systematically formulated *logos* concept or not, therefore, the author does seem to have a sense of the power and order of God's word in his action in the world. This *logos* is not to be exclusively equated with Christ, although verses like 1:3; 2:6-8, 10, etc ... indicate that he is the embodiment *par excellence* of God's wisdom for the world. Terminology relating to fittingness, necessity, and impossibility also demonstrate that there is a certain *logical* structure to the world.[101] One can therefore see in the thought of the author a certain *logos* which proceeds from God in his ordering of the creation, although one must be careful not to overread the language. We will explore the relationship between Christ and the creation under this rubric in chapter 4.[102]

VI. *Conclusion*

While the previous chapter outlined salvation history in Hebrews by noting the contrasts between the two ages and their respective covenants, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate a strong sense of continuity in the purpose of God in that same history. From the very first verse of the epistle, it is the same God who spoke through the prophets, the angels and the Law which they delivered, Moses, the Levitical cultus, and most importantly of all, through Christ. The old covenant was not a mistake, but a part of the overall plan of God to lead the people of God, the faithful, the heirs of the promise, to their destined honour and glory in victory over the power of death.

This continuity is especially to be seen in language of promise in the epistle. The author clearly believes the new covenant to be a promise for all those who become enlightened and are sanctified through the sacrifice of Christ. This promise can be spoken of in several ways. It is, for example, the future rest of

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[100]For brief arguments that χαρακτήρ in particular is Philonic, see J. Frankowski's 'Early Christian Hymns Recorded in the New Testament: A Reconsideration of the Question in the Light of Heb 1,3', *BibZeit* 27 (1982) 186. For the contrary opinion, see Williamson, *Philo and Hebrews* 74-80.

[101]See above, pp. 111-12, n. 78 and 79.

[102]See chapter 4, p. 137-39.

the people of God in the heavenly city. It is the perfection of believers as they attain their appointed end within the scheme of God's purposes. God guarantees all of this with his unchangeable oath, giving strong encouragement to those who believe.

In our view, one contribution this chapter makes to Hebrews' scholarship is our clarification of the nature of perfection language in the epistle. While a number of scholars have recognised the necessity for understanding this language formally, no one has, in our opinion, quite caught the exact nuance of the language. Peterson's treatment agrees with our conclusion, but he does not state the overarching principle clearly enough. Our treatment, on the other hand, recognised that the 'goal' which can be applied to every instance of perfection language in the epistle is the appropriate status for any given thing within the purpose of God. Whether the reference is to Christ or believers, to be perfected is to reach one's appointed place within God's intended order. To our knowledge, this study represents the most precise appraisal of how perfection language functions in the epistle to date.

The author of Hebrews also implies that the old covenant anticipated the new, that it was in fact patterned after the true and ultimate covenant in an imprecise way. It was not the failure of the first ones to receive God's promise which led to the need for a second and different promise. Rather, God was ordering from the very start the first covenant as an illustration of the second, bringing things to pass in accordance with the necessities and prerogatives of his plan. While the first covenant was an imperfect shadow of God's work in Christ and not a mirror image, it pointed to this work in a God ordained way. All of this implies a certain '*logos*' to the world. When one notes the wisdom language used of Christ in 1:3 and the author's repeated use of the motif of God's 'speaking' (cf. 4:12), the likelihood of some sort of some conception of God's *logos* on the part of the author becomes more and more likely. God's plan and purposes in creation and salvation history give rise to the entire plot and unify the story.

PART 2
THE COSMOLOGICAL SETTINGS OF THE PLOT

CHAPTER 4
The Created Realm

I. *Introduction*

As we have seen in the investigation so far, the central event of the plot of salvation history in Hebrews pertains to two realms. On the one hand, it involves the death of Jesus Christ, who suffered *physically* 'outside the gate' (13:12) of the *earthly* Jerusalem. We have already argued in chapter 2 that this is in part that to which the author refers when he speaks of the offering of Christ. In the author's rhetoric, however, the offering of the sacrifice also involved Christ's entrance into the holy of holies in *heaven*, an event which chapter 5 will argue roughly corresponds to Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. This death/exaltation sequence constitutes the central event of salvation history.[1]

Christ's high priesthood, however, is a heavenly office, at least in terms of the author's main rhetorical purpose, as can be seen from the author's statement in 8:4 that Christ could not have served as a priest upon the earth. We have already seen in chapter 2 that the author uses the metaphor of the high priesthood of Christ in order to contrast Christ directly with the Law and the Levitical order as a whole. This contrast, however, is not simply eschatological; it is cosmological as well. The author is able to undermine the primacy of the old order by positing the invisible, heavenly realm over and against the visible world in which the Levitical priests serve the 'tabernacle'. This distinction between the heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible, pervades especially chapters 8-10, where the two tabernacles are contrasted, but it is also present throughout the epistle, whether it is explicitly mentioned or implicitly presupposed.

The previous section of this study has attempted to lay out the basic 'plotline' of salvation history as the author of Hebrews might have conceived it. It concluded that salvation history could be divided roughly into two broad epochs, each with its respective covenant which God made with his people. These two ages, however, were seen to overlap, giving rise to an 'in between' time in which the new age had begun and the old had lost its relevance, but the old had not completely disappeared. The plot itself, therefore, consists of the 'yesterday' leading up to the sacrifice of Christ, the 'forever' after Christ has

[1]As I noted in chapter 2, p. 79f., I disagree both with N. H. Young, who sees the death of Christ as his offering ('Gospel' 208-9) and with W. E. Brooks (n. 101, 'Perpetuity' 212), who believes the sacrifice to exclude Christ's death. As I have put forward, the author is speaking metaphorically and is not overly specific in this language. The atoning event spans both realms.

'appeared a second time', and 'today', the eschatological present in which old and new coincide.

The problem of the delay of the parousia and the death of the first apostles was one shared in common by second generation Christianity.[2] The plot of salvation history had not seemed to come to its proper conclusion after the resurrection of Christ, and all that the early church had expected to follow upon that event had not yet come to pass. In this period, the author of Hebrews was not the first to use 'cosmological' and 'psychological' imagery to hold this 'now' and 'not yet' of the Christian faith in tension,[3] but he certainly used spatial and psychological motifs in a manner unique in the New Testament. He was able to explicate the overlap of the two ages cosmologically, with the old age tied inextricably to the earthly, visible realm and the new tied to the spiritual and heavenly dimensions of existence.

The previous section, therefore, has laid out the basic contours of the plot of salvation history as the necessary background for a proper understanding of the cosmology of the epistle. Without such groundwork, the exploration of precise background questions, such as whether the epistle is Platonic or not, would be conducted without the proper perspective. This section, therefore, aims not only to fill in the cosmological settings which are so central to the narrative of salvation history in Hebrews, but also to confront certain background questions in the context of exegesis. From the very beginning of the study, we have argued that such a text-centred approach is the most legitimate way to conduct such an inquiry and the one which ultimately holds the most promise for overcoming the seeming impasse in the debate.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore one of the two 'settings' of the plot of salvation history in the Epistle to the Hebrews, namely, the created realm. The other setting is of course heaven, where Christ enters into the true holy of holies. Given the eschatological framework of old and new in the epistle, it is not difficult to ascertain to which age the created realm belongs. As we shall see, Hebrews is permeated with both implicit and explicit indications that the created and earthly realm have *intrinsic* associations with the old age, a period which is 'antiquated and about to disappear' (8:13). This is not to say that the created realm is 'bad' or 'evil' in some sense. It simply has served its purpose and is destined to be removed.

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[2]I tend to date Hebrews within the twenty years following the destruction of Jerusalem, although the precise date is not essential to my argument. The epistle certainly belongs to second generation Christianity (cf. 2:3), and the recipients may need encouragement at least in part because of the delay of the parousia (e.g. 10:36-38).

[3]Cf, for example, Paul in Galatians when he speaks of the present Jerusalem and the 'ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ', as well as the flesh/spirit distinction of Romans 7 and Galatians 5.

In the following pages, we will attempt to flesh out those 'metaphysical' aspects of the author's thought which explain various statements and associations which he makes. This will not always be easy, as many of these assumptions are not explicitly stated. Gaps in meaning in the text may consign these questions ultimately to the realm of speculation. We will nevertheless proceed by, first, exploring language in the epistle which expresses the transience of the created realm, followed by an investigation of the contrast between flesh and spirit. These two studies will then be brought together with the brief discussion of *logos* overtones in chapter 3 in order to try to form a coherent picture of how the author might have conceived of the creation in relation to soteriology.

II. *The Transcience of the Created Realm*

There are two key passages in Hebrews which demonstrate that the created heavens and earth are destined to end along with the final remnants of the old covenant and thus that they are intrinsically associated with the old age. The first of these is 1:10-12, which is one of those fascinating instances in the New Testament when an author transfers to Christ an Old Testament Scripture which clearly referred to Yahweh in its original context, in this case Psalm 102 (101 LXX):26-28:

> You at the beginning, Lord, founded the earth,
> and the heavens are the works of your hands.
> They will perish, but you remain,
> and they all as a garment will become worn out,
> and as a covering you will roll them up,
> *as a garment* even they will be changed.
> But you are the same and your years will not run out.

The context of this quotation is of course the contrast in chapter 1 between the Son and the angels, a contrast which we have already argued is primarily eschatological in nature.[4] The author sets up the contrast with this Old Testament Scripture in 1:7 by relating the angels to winds[5] and flames of fire, that is, things which are transitory and 'earthy' in nature. James Thompson has claimed that the point of this verse is to demonstrate the inferiority of the angels

[4]In chapter 2, pp. 56ff.

[5]The word πνεῦμα of course could be translated as spirit, but in conjunction with the image of a flame, perhaps wind is a better translation in this verse.

by noting their changeability in conjunction with the created order.[6] Although he wrongly seems to exclude angels from the heavenly realm altogether,[7] Thompson may be right to see an association of the angels with the created realm and its transience, noting the connection between the angels which are 'flames of fire' in 1:7 and the *tangible* mountain with its 'burning fire' in 12:18,[8] present when the Law was given on Sinai. Although he misses the eschatological overtones of this fire and wind imagery, he catches its cosmological and 'metaphysical' associations.

That the transience of the angels' 'ministry' is the point of the contrast in 1:7f is seen by an examination of 1:8-12. Here the author uses two other Old Testament passages to contrast the angels with the superiority of the Son.[9] While the angels have been made 'winds' and 'flames' in association with the material realm,[10] the Son's throne is 'for ever' (1:8 quoting Ps. 45:6-7 [44:7-8 LXX]). The Son will remain and his years will not come to an end, while the heavens and the earth will perish and be rolled up like a garment (1:11-12). From this common theme of the Son's eternal continuance, it is clear that the author understands 1:7 as an indication of the transitoriness of the *role* of the angels in contrast to the exalted Christ. By implication, the role of the angels in their 'ministry' (1:7, 14) is associated with the transience of the created realm, for otherwise the contrast of the endurance of the Son with the created order would not relate to the angels in 1:7. Although we favour the interpretation which sees the οἰκουμένη of 1:6 as the heavenly realm, a reading which equates

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[6]*The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1982) 133. See also O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, MeyerK, 8th ed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984 [1936]) 117; O. Kuss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, RNT (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1966) 37; and W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word (Dallas: Word, 1991) 29.

[7]Hebrews 12:22 demonstrates invariably that angels will be present in the heavenly Jerusalem. The verb ποιέω in 1:7 should probably be taken in the sense of appointment or assignment, rather than in the sense of creation.

[8]Note also the possible connection between the 'winds' of 1:7 and the 'windstorm' (θυέλλα) of 12:18.

[9]Here the author uses some of the 'highest' Christological language in the New Testament, referring to Christ as 'God' (1:8) and applying to him words used of God in the Psalms. C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962) 79 and L. Hurst, 'The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2, *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, edited by L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 151-164, have suggested, following B.W. Bacon, that the LXX of Ps. 101 can be understood as being spoken by God to the Messiah, but this seems a bit far fetched.

[10]It is perhaps worthwhile to note that 'fire' and 'air' were two of the fundamental components of the world in ancient philosophy.

it with the earthly realm could indicate that the world is the locus of angelic operation.[11]

As we have argued, therefore, the principal factor behind the author's choice of Ps. 102 has to do with the Son's enduring quality, in contrast to the angels.[12] In terms of the created realm, the interesting aspects of the author's use of this Psalm are the 'rolling up' of the heavens and earth as one rolls up a covering and the 'changing' of the created realm as a garment. The reading of ἑλίσσω here, 'to roll up', is not the reading chosen by Rahlfs edition of the LXX, but it is found in some LXX manuscripts,[13] and thus cannot necessarily be used to pinpoint the author's thinking. On the other hand, the addition of 'as a garment' here seems to be the author's own doing. This redaction implies that the author believed that the created realm at some future point would, at the very least, be changed and taken off like a garment.[14] This 'taking off' of the created realm is thoroughly linked to the final disappearance of the old covenant, as is indicated by the common use of παλαιόω in 1:11 and 8:13.[15]

The second key passage confirms that the author is implying the *destruction* of the created realm, namely in 12:25-29, which is a quotation of Haggai 2:21 (or 6). This is a truly intriguing passage which appears in the context of paraenesis. In the earlier part of chapter 12, the author had exhorted the readers to endure the discipline of the Lord (12:7) and to beware that they not become like Esau, who sought a place of repentance with tears but failed to find it (12:15f). The author then reiterates in hortatory form the nature of their belief. They had not arrived at a *tangible* mountain like Sinai with its fire, darkness, gloom, and windstorm, whereat even Moses was frightened (12:18-21). Rather, their 'mountain' was 'Zion', the *heavenly* Jerusalem, city of the living God, and they had come to the mediator of a new covenant (12:22-24). In these verses, the author alludes to the earlier contrast in the epistle between the old and new covenants and to the Law with its cultic ritual in contrast to the blood of Christ.

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[11]See chapter 2, p. 58-59. Michel, *Hebräer* 121, argues for such a connection when he notes of 1:11, 'Vielleicht darf man gerade hier daran denken, daß die Himmel die Wohnung der Engel sind und ihr Schicksal auch die Engel angeht.' I do not tie the destiny of the angels themselves to that of the created heavens, as I have indicated, but I would tie their *role* as the 'ministers' of humanity to the time of the old order.

[12]The pre-existence of the Son is, therefore, not the main point of this citation, although it is significant that Christ is placed 'outside' of the created order.

[13]Vaticanus (B) and Alexandrinus (A).

[14]Attridge, *Hebrews* 61, suggests that the word 'change' in this context is too weak and that the word 'remove' fits the context better, especially in the light of 12:26-27.

[15]Thompson, *Beginnings* 136, once again sees the connection, but fails to emphasise the eschatological point.

The readers are no longer in the assembly of the first covenant, but in the church of the firstborn enrolled *in the heavens*. Implicit in this exhortation is at least a contrast between visible and invisible, between that which is presently upon the earth and that which is associated with heaven and the future.[16] The author then goes on to warn the readers. If those in the old covenant did not escape when they refused *on the earth* the one warning them, how much less will those in the new covenant be excused if they reject the one warning *from the heavens*. Since the author believes that God made both covenants (although the first was spoken 'through angels' [2:2]), it is clear that the author considers heaven in some way superior to the present earthly realm.

This supposition is confirmed by the following verses. Verses 26 and 27 in particular read:

> ... whereas the voice shook the earth then, now it has been promised saying, 'yet one more time I will shake *not only* the earth, *but* also the heaven.' Now the 'yet once more' indicates the μετάθεσις of those things which are being shaken, since they are created, in order that those things which are not shaken might remain.

One key issue here is the precise meaning of the word μετάθεσις in verse 27. Does it imply only a change of the created realm or a complete removal of it.[17] Both meanings would seem to be possible, and both seem to be attested in the two other occurrences of the word group in the epistle. In 7:12, for example, it seems to imply a complete removal of the Levitical priesthood: 'for when the priesthood has been "changed", a "change" of law also must necessarily occur'. Although the word *change* may provide the best translation here, it is clear from the author's argument that this is a complete removal of the Levitical priesthood and the Law with which it is identified, in order to establish the new, Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ.

The other verse in which the noun and verb occur is 11:5, which speaks of Enoch's transformation: 'By faith Enoch was "changed" so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God "removed" him, for before his "removal" it had been witnessed that he had pleased God'. Here, both a sense of removal and of transformation seem to be present, the former because Enoch

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[16]One is reminded of 11:1, 'Now faith is the substance of those things hoped, the verification of things which are not visible'. As C. K. Barrett points out, 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954) 381, this is an eschatological faith, 'which is convinced of future good because it knows that the good for which it hopes already exists invisibly in God.' Perhaps it would have been better to say that it already exists invisibly in heaven *with* God.

[17]We thus face a similar issue as that brought up by Attridge with regard to 1:12.

is 'not found' and the latter because of possible body/spirit connotations.[18] One would not seem to be able to determine the meaning, therefore, on a usage or lexical basis.

The train of thought in 12:27, however, seems to indicate the meaning of 'removal'. As we have noted above, the context is speaking of God's future judgement. In this discussion, the author makes a clear distinction between two different categories, namely, τὰ σαλευόμενα, those things which are being shaken, and τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα, those things which are not being shaken. There is no overlap between these two groups, since the one is that which is not the other. The author clearly states that only those things which are *not* shaken remain. This implies that the created realm, which is shaken, both heavens and earth,[19] will not just be changed, but removed altogether, annihilated.[20] Thompson has described this situation well when he writes,

> The author does not speak of the new heavens and new earth which follow the eschatological shaking, nor the appearance of the unshakeable world. Instead, he knows of two worlds already possessing reality ... . When the material world disappears, only the world that is presently unseen (11:1) and untouchable (12:18) remains.

Here Thompson has caught the general gist of the passage, although his contrast of the material with the *noumenal* may very well misread that which is contrasted. That which is shaken in this passage is not described as material (although it is, 12:18), but rather by the words 'ὡς πεποιημένων', which seems to imply a strong connection between shakeability *and createdness*, more so than with materiality. Such an association may reflect a belief that the created

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[18]On the other hand, one could translate the first occurance of the verb in 11:5 as 'taken up', maintaining the removal motif.

[19]The author makes a point of the fact that God will 'not only' shake the earth, 'but' the heavens as well. These syntactical clues are insertions by the author which highlight the removal of the created heavens in addition to the earth. For a discussion of the two or three types of οὐρανός in Hebrews, see chapter 5, p. 184-87. Here there is obviously a distinction to be made between the created heavens, which are shaken, and the unshakeable heaven, which is the destiny of the people of God.

[20]Cf. 2 Peter 3:7, 10 (but 3:13); *4 Ezra* 7:31 (but 7:75); *2 Enoch* 65:6 etc. Some of those who interpret this verse in this general way include Käsemann, *Wandering* 52; Cody, *Liturgy* 85; and Thompson, *Beginnings* 50, here quoted. L. Hurst may certainly be correct to say of 12:26 that 'the context of the passage in Haggai is important', 'Eschatology and "Platonism" in the Epistle to the Hebrews', SBLSP (Atlanta: Scholars, 1984) 71, but the agenda of the author of Hebrews and that of Haggai are quite different. Haggai's statements about temple restoration and the overthrowing of kingdoms could easily have been taken by Hebrews in the manner here suggested.

realm is in some way *innately* inferior to the true heaven, perhaps because of the nature of its createdness.[21]

It need hardly be mentioned that if it is only the unshakeable heaven which will survive in the fulness of the new age, then all the language throughout the epistle which pertains to the coming world and city pertains strictly to the heavenly realm and not to the earthly. The coming world of 2:5, which Christ and the people of God will rule is the heavenly realm. God is taking hold of the seed of Abraham to lead them to the glory of the true heaven (2:16), and the powers of the coming age of which the enlightened have tasted are 'heavenly' (6:4).[22]

There is no indication in the epistle that would argue that this is not the case. Rather, all the imagery which is present in Hebrews substantiates this reading of the text. The recipients of the epistle are 'partakers of a heavenly calling' (3:1), indicating the direction of their pilgrimage. They are not seeking a place upon the earth, but a heavenly city (11:10) and country (11:14), which is a better home (11:16). In fact, they confess that they are strangers and pilgrims *upon the earth* (11:13). As we have already mentioned, they have not arrived at a *tangible* mountain (12:18), but at the *heavenly* Jerusalem and the assembly of those who are enrolled *in the heavens* (12:22-3). Here on earth, on the other hand, is no lasting city (13:14), in contrast to the heavenly kingdom, which is unshakeable (12:28). These statements do not present any role for the created heavens and earth in the coming age, nor any need for their existence at that time.

When the author is not explicitly urging his readers toward their heavenly destination and rest in distinction from the transitory earth,[23] he quite frequently implies this contrast. This is particularly true of the central, theological section of the epistle, where the undebateable superiority of the heavenly tent over the earthly, 'κοσμικόν' sanctuary (9:1) is repeatedly implied. The tabernacle in which Christ's ministry occurs is the 'true tent', which was not pitched by a human (8:2). The author makes much of this fact, noting that the 'greater and

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[21]Hurst has noted that the heavenly tent and city are also made by God (e.g. 8:1; 11:10), as are the angels (1:7; for that matter, even the Son himself seems to be 'made' by God [3:2]), but that none of these are 'of this creation' (9:11). The important thing for Hurst is thus whether something is of this creation or of the unshakeable heaven ('Platonism' 72).

[22]The reference to the heavenly gift here is of course probably to the Holy Spirit, but this gift is only a foretaste of the powers which pertain to the coming, heavenly age.

[23]I thus agree with Käsemann, *Wandering* 33f., that the κατάπαυσις of the people of God is ultimately found spatially in the coming world, while denying any Gnostic implications to these terms. Cf. O. Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, WUNT 11 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1970) *passim*.

more perfect tent' is not only not made by hands (χειροποιήτος)[24] but is in fact 'not of this creation' (9:11, 24). Here again is implied the distinction between the creation, which is inferior, and the unshakeable heaven. The earthly tent and its functions only point to the heavenly, true ministry; they have no independent significance. Christ, thus, is not a high priest *upon the earth* (8:4), where the priests serve τὰ ἐπουράνια by way of a 'shadowy illustration' (8:5);[25] and Moses was only able to construct the earthly tent on the basis of a τύπος which was shown him. This earthly holy place was only a sketch or example of the heavenly one, an 'antitype' of the true sanctuary (9:23). The greatness of what Christ has done, on the other hand, comes from the fact that he is now 'higher than the heavens' (7:26), through which he has passed (4:14) as he entered 'inside the veil' (6:19).

A final passage may indicate that the creation is destined for annihilation, although we will discuss the matter more fully in chapter 5.[26] We have already discussed 9:8-9 in chapter 2 in the context of the epistle's eschatology.[27] There we argued that the author used the two tents of the earthly tabernacle as a parable for the two ages of salvation history. The way to the holiest place, we claimed, was not yet apparent while the first tent was standing. A further possible nuance to this passage, however, suggests itself in the light of the author's belief in the future destruction of the created realm. If the author were at least at times to draw upon a cosmological reading of the tabernacle, an interpretation found in Philo and Josephus, then the created realm might be equated with the outer tent, while the true heaven would correspond to the holy of holies. Such an interpretation would posit an inextricable link between the old age and the created realm, as well as between the new age and heaven. The heavenly city is thus invisible and unseen while the creation is still in existence (cf. 11:1, 3, 7, 27), and the people of God must proceed by faith until the creation is removed. This possibility should be borne in mind until it can be more fully examined in chapter 5.

The preceding indicates, therefore, both that the author considered the earthly, 'created' realm to be inferior in some way to the heavenly, unshakeable realm and that he believed the created heavens and earth to be destined for

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[24]This word has regularly polemic connotations and is found several times in the New Testament (Attridge, *Hebrews* 247), such as Mk. 14:58; Acts 7:48; 17:24 (of temple); and Eph. 2:11 (of circumcision).

[25]For a justification for translating ὑποδείματι καὶ σκιᾷ as 'by way of a shadowy illustration', see chapter 3, n. 88 and chapter 5, p. 166.

[26]See chapter 5, pp. 147-54.

[27]See chapter 2, pp. 66-69.

'shaking' and removal. As a covering, God would eventually wrap them up, leaving only the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God and those who have been perfected. As we have already implied, this contrast between true heaven and creation at the very least associates the characteristics of the old age with the creation and those of the new with heaven. Heaven, thus, becomes the realm associated with completion and permanence.[28] While the earthly is changing and the visible will pass away, the audience has a better possession which will *remain* (10:34). The book's contrast between multiplicity and singularity also accrues to the created and heavenly realms respectively. These categories could also have metaphysical overtones, as the distinction between unity and multiplicity is used elsewhere as an expression of the difference between the material and noumenal.[29]

Having identified and highlighted the contrast in Hebrews between the heavenly and the created, we have yet to explain *why* the creation is inferior and why it is destined for destruction. This is a particularly difficult question, since the epistle nowhere discusses this issue. In fact, the author seems to presuppose at every point that the creation *qua* creation is automatically and intrinsically destined for destruction and that any human within that domain is automatically in need of atonement. The author seems to state without second thought that if Christ's sacrifice was not a once and for all offering, then he would have had to have suffered 'from the foundation of the world' (9:26). There is no mention of a Fall or of Adam, only an oblique reference to the Devil as the one holding the power of death. We will reconsider this issue in a moment, after we first look at the contrast between flesh and spirit in the epistle.

III. *Flesh and Spirit*

I have argued so far that the author considers the created realm to be inferior to the heavenly and that the creation will be removed when the old age reaches its end. We have noted that the author associates the earthly and heavenly with the old and new covenants respectively, and that he uses the 'foreignness' and transcience of this earthly realm as a basis for encouraging his readers to

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[28]For a discussion of perfection, see chapter 3, pp. 97-106.

[29]Cf., for example, several examples in Philo given by L. K. K. Dey in *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLDS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975) 129f., including *Ebr.* 36, 85-87; *Plant.* 44; *Som.* 2.10; *Mig.* 152-54. Dey notes significantly that 'imperfection does not mean something bad or evil in this tradition' (134).

orientate themselves toward the other, heavenly world. These are all distinctions which are made explicitly or implicitly on the level of cosmology.

The author's use of the distinction between flesh and spirit, on the other hand, is a 'psychological' contrast which may also relate in some way to the cosmological framework of the epistle which we have been discussing. If this association can be made, then the superiority of the spiritual over the fleshly will lend strong weight to the argument thus far, while also providing potential clarity on the nature of the creation/heaven contrast. Not only does the author clearly consider the spiritual dimension of humanity the truly significant aspect, but the author does so in a way which does not disparage the 'fleshly' component of human personality.

Repeatedly in the central theological section of the epistle, the author argues for the superiority of Christ's sacrifice because it is effective in cleansing the conscience in contrast to the mere washing of the 'flesh' which the Levitical cultus effected. The author does not feel the need to argue that such an 'inner' cleansing would be far more valuable to the readers than a mere outward cleaning. *He assumes that such an order of creation is self-evident and innate.* So in 9:9 and 10, the author notes that the gifts and sacrifices which the Levitical priests bring are not able to 'perfect' the worshipper in terms of their 'conscience' or 'consciousness' of past sins,[30] but that these cultic ordinances are merely 'regulations of *flesh* imposed until the time of reformation'. Similarly in 9:13-14 the author contrasts the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a red heifer, which sanctify in the cleansing of the *flesh*, to the blood of the Christ, who *through an eternal spirit* offered himself blameless to God, leading to the cleansing of one's *conscience* in terms of the 'dead works' or sins which one has committed. In both of these instances, the author assumes that a cleansing of the flesh is not an effectual cleansing, as he confirms repeatedly by his intimations that the old covenant was not actually able to take away sins. This makes it clear that to the author the physical dimension of a person is not the truly significant aspect. The human body belongs to the realm of the transitory, material, earthly world. The important part of a human being is the spirit, which is that which is capable of reaching heaven, both in the present and in the coming world.

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[30]See chapter 3, p. 103 and n. 54. That the primary meaning of συνείδησις is the 'consciousness' of past deeds, whether sinful or not, is confirmed by the author's parallelism between 10:2 and 3, where συνείδησις is placed in parallel with 'remembrance'. The argument is that if the Law had been able to perfect those who 'drew near', such persons would have stopped offering sacrifices, 'since the worshippers would no longer have had any *consciousness* of sins'. The author then justifies this claim with the comment, 'for in these sacrifices is a *remembrance* of sins yearly'. The 'conscience' in Hebrews, therefore, is really a function of the mind, whose remembrance of the presence or absence of sins either accuses or excuses the individual.

It is evident from an examination of Hebrews that the author conceives of at least these two dimensions to human personality, namely, the body and the spirit. The role of the soul is more difficult to place, although it is interestingly used only of a person while 'in the body'. Ψυχή seems to be used only when the author is speaking of the encouragement or preservation of the recipients with respect to their need for endurance (6:19; 10:39; 12:3; 13:17). On the other hand, πνεῦμα has an almost exclusively 'heavenly' connotation. Aside from the author's reference to the ability of God's word to divide soul and spirit (4:12), none of the other uses of spirit in Hebrews seem to apply to human personality in general, but are limited to those righteous who have been 'perfected'. Its heavenly connotations thus allow it to carry the same overtones of alienation from the earthly realm which we have already noted.

In 6:4, therefore, one of the images used of conversion is that of tasting the heavenly gift, which is further described as partaking *of holy spirit.* Although it is likely that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit, the absence of the article should not be passed over too hastily. The author uses the article quite consistently elsewhere when he refers to the Holy Spirit (3:7; 9:8; 10:15, 29). Here, the absence of the article highlights the nature of the thing rather than the specific thing itself.[31] The *heavenly* gift which is so exalted is a gift of spirit, and holy spirit no less. This verse thus seems to make an implicit connection between spirit and heaven. Further, the parallelism continues to describe this experience as a tasting of the good word of God and of the powers of the coming age. This implies once again an association between the Spirit of which believers partake and the heavenly realm, which we have argued is the sole realm of the coming age. Their spirits have been empowered by holy Spirit, which is but a taste of that heavenly city toward which they are wandering.

This 'birth' of human spirit, so to speak, can also be seen in the paraenesis of 12:9. In this verse, the author contrasts the discipline which fathers *of flesh* administer with that of the father *of spirits,* that is, God. It is perhaps noteworthy here that God is only the father of his children; that is to say, the spirits of which God is father are only the spirits of his people. As I have already said, Hebrews does not emphasise πνεῦμα in a general pyschological sense with reference to all humanity. The use of this phrase in Hebrews differs in this respect from the way it is used in Numbers, from which the author has borrowed it (16:22; 27:16). It is the spirits of God's 'sons', or children, which he disciplines so that they might live. This demonstrates that the association of spirit with the heavenly realm is not a general correspondence but is limited to

[31]So also with the anarthrous υἱός in 1:2, 5:8, and 7:28.

those who have partaken of the Christ. As we shall see, the only spirits which reach 'inside the veil' are those of the perfected.

Another interesting connection in 12:9 is between spirit and life. The life here is presumably eternal, heavenly life, which the father of spirits is ensuring through his discipline. This life can be seen against the background of chapter 2, where the author explains how Christ, by tasting death for all (2:9), transformed those who were subject to slavery all their lives because of the fear of death (2:15). The disciplining of the spirits of the people of God ensures that they will indeed be saved 'out of death' (5:7).

It is significant that the author was not forced to make these comments about God's discipline in this way. That he does so underlines the role that the contrast between flesh and spirit has in his thinking. It demonstrates a fundamental distinction in his mind between the material realm, of which flesh is a part, and the heavenly realm. As the author can encourage the readers on the basis of the alienness of the earthly realm in a cosmological sense, he can do so as well by implying that the physical and fleshly is not the most important part of the person, but rather an aspect of humanity which will eventually be discarded with the created realm.

Another reference to the spirits of the people of God occurs in 12:23, where the recipients are said to have come already to the *heavenly* Jerusalem, to the assembly of the first born who have been enrolled *in the heavens*, and to the *spirits* of righteous ones who have been perfected. Once again, the connection between spirit and heaven is confirmed. The temporal element of this statement is blurred to include both events which are already past, such as the blood which sprinkles, and events which are future, such as God the judge. What all of these events have in common is that they represent together the consummation of the new covenant, both those aspects which have already been accomplished and those which will soon come to pass. The author can thus emphasise the surety of them all by using the perfect tense — 'you have come to' (12:22). 'The spirits of righteous ones who have been perfected', therefore, represents all of those who will be faithful and attain to the heavenly city. This perfection can be said in a sense to have already been accomplished on earth in the spirits of those who have been sanctified by the sacrifice of Christ (10:14),[32] but this company presumably also includes the heroes of faith from chapter 11 who were not able to be perfected before Christ (11:40). What is noteworthy here for our investigation is the fact that physical bodies are in no way associated in the

[32]Cf. Käsemann, *Wandering* 141f.

epistle in any way with this heavenly congregation, only the *spirits* of the righteous.[33]

From the preceding, a picture begins to form of a basically dichtomous view of the person in Hebrews, namely, a body and a spirit. How exactly the spirit is to be conceived, for example in its relationship to the soul or to rationality, is difficult to delineate, given the sparse and allusive nature of the text in this regard. What is clear, however, is that it is of a different nature from the earthly body. The body is throughout associated with the transitory and temporary, while the spirit is the important aspect of humanity and the part which is potentially eternal. The body is thus mentioned either as a passing phase and perhaps even as a hindrance to righteousness.

It should be noted, for example, that death is only possible because of the physicality of a human being, and it is death more than any other thing which the author focuses on in chapter 2 as the essence of the need for Christ. Jesus is crowned with glory and honour through the suffering of death, so that he can taste death for all (2:9). He is perfected through suffering (2:10; 5:8-9) and partakes of flesh and blood with the express purpose of destroying the one who has the power of death, the Devil (2:14). The connection between the Devil and death as a function of corporeality provide a marked illustration of the relationship between embodiment and the need for redemption in the author's mind. It was of no mean value to the author that his text of Psalm 40 read that God had prepared a *body* for Christ (10:5). This was the essence of what the heavenly high priest needed in order to be a proper sacrifice, and Christ speaks of this corporeality as he enters *into the world*, making an implicit connection between embodiment and the created realm. Christ frees from the fear of death by defeating the one who has power over bodies and opens up the possibility of endless life (2:15).

Christ's victory over death is also one of the most highlighted aspects of the superiority of his high priesthood in chapter 7. Although this chapter does imply that Christ was 'without beginning of days' in some way (7:3), it focuses particularly on the fact that he has no end of life and that Christ remains a priest forever (7:3). The Levitical priests are hindered in their service, because they die (7:8, 23). This is not a problem for the heavenly high priest, because he always lives to intercede for his people (7:8, 25). Christ is according to the likeness of Melchizedek, an order which is characterised by 'indestructible' life, a life which is explicitly contrasted with the Law consisting of *fleshly* commandments (7:16). He offers himself through an eternal spirit, which

[33]The author never uses the language of Paul in 1 Cor. 15 when he speaks of a spiritual *body*, although this may very well be the thinking of Hebrews as well.

probably refers to his own everlasting life rather than to the Holy Spirit (9:14).[34] Although there may be some sense in which immortality is implied in these passages, the most important element of the argument is that Christ does not die like earthly priests do. He, on the contrary, has been saved 'out of death' (5:7). This sometimes unrecognised aspect of the author's soteriology demonstrates the connection between the Devil, death, and corporeality. It implies that there is something about the earthly realm, creation, and materiality which implies sin and death and, therefore, the need for redemption. 13:3, therefore, can urge sympathy for those who are in prison and who are treated badly, since the readers are also 'in the body' and can thus understand those challenges which come because of physicality.

IV. The Rational

A final word should be said about the *rational* dimension of Hebrews. Although it is not completely clear what the connection between rationality and human spirit might be, it seems a strong possibility that the two are overlapping categories. The author gives repeated indications of the importance of 'rationality' in defining both sin and salvation. We have already encountered the use of the term 'conscience' to identify that which is cleansed in contrast to the flesh. As 10:2 and 3 make clear, συνείδησις is conceived by the author largely in cognitive terms, and is (at least in these verses) best translated by the word 'consciousness'. The verses thus read that the sacrifices of the old covenant were never able to perfect those who drew near, 'since otherwise, would they not have stopped offering them, because they would have no longer have had any *consciousness* of sins, those who worship having been cleansed once and for all? But in these sacrifices is a *remembrance* of sins yearly'. The parallelism between συνείδησις and 'remembrance' demonstrates that the conscience is primarily conceived by the author as that rational faculty which remembers past sins.

In addition to the rational flavour of the author's use of conscience, his conception of sin itself also has a rational taste. Following no doubt a well developed tradition, the author uses the image of 'enlightenment' twice (6:4; 10:32) in reference to conversion, and makes the scripturally unique claim that the Day of Atonement only provided for 'sins committed in ignorance' (9:7),

[34]So Attridge, *Hebrews* 251, writes, 'the spirit here most likely refers to Christ and to the interior or spiritual quality of his sacrificial act.' It is of course possible that the author sees some connection between the spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

something which not even Philo taught.[35] This image of willful sin in the light of knowledge occurs again at 10:26, where the author notes that willful sinning after one has received a *knowledge* of the truth exhausts the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice. The author's use of Jeremiah 31 (38 LXX):31-34 in chapter 8 also highlights the fact that in the new covenant, God will place his laws upon the *minds* of his people, a fact the author emphasises by his inclusion of the same verses in his recap of the citation in 10:16-17. In the new covenant, God's people will no longer need to teach one another about the Lord, because everyone will *know* him, from the smallest to the greatest (8:11),[36] and the perfect in that covenant have disciplined their *senses* so that they might be able to *discern* good and evil (5:14). All of these images have strong rational overtones. It is no coincidence that the author uses lengthy theological exposition in order to exhort his readers to endure. For him, there is a natural connection between knowledge and action.

We are now in a position to summarise the 'psychological' contrast between flesh and spirit in Hebrews in terms of the cosmological distinction between the created realm and heaven. First of all, it should be noted that, while there is a one to one correspondence between the fleshly and the created, earthly realm, there is only a correspondance between the spirits of the *righteous* and heaven. When spirit is contrasted with flesh in Hebrews, it is always done either in terms of Christ or of those who have been perfected through his sacrifice, having offered himself through an eternal spirit. Although Hebrews has a definite rational flavour, the mind does not automatically belong to the heavenly realm.

On the other hand, those who have partaken of Christ are able, through his intercession, to reach heaven and penetrate 'inside the veil' (9:19; 10:20). The faithful are thus exhorted repeatedly to 'draw near' to the heavenly realm. So while the spirit of an individual does not automatically attain to the heavenly realm, that is certainly where it finds its most appropriate place. The material seems to be the tool by which the devil is able to hold the power of death, first over the body, but by inference over the spirit as well.

The picture of the make-up of a son of God, therefore, seems to be one in which the spirit of the individual 'has partaken' of a body (2:14), just as Christ can be figuratively heard to say as he entered the world, 'you prepared a body for me'. To be 'in the body', however, is a temporary state which does not

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[35]Attridge, *Hebrews* 239, draws attention to *Post.* 48 and *Spec. Leg.* 2.196.

[36]Although Dey's work on 'patterns in perfection' in Philo, *Intermediary World*, does not by and large seem to illuminate the contrast of Christ with the old covenant in Hebrews, Philo's distinction between self-taught' knowledge (as Isaac) and the need for discipline (Jacob) or teaching (Abraham) does seem to provide a possibility of how the author *might* have understood this part of the citation.

represent the individual in his or her truest self. The 'fleshliness' of the Levitical priests and their sacrifices contrasts with the indestructible life and eternal spirit of Christ. God is the father of spirit, a far higher paternity that that of the fathers of flesh. The flesh is just another aspect of the material, created realm which is destined to be destroyed. Although the flesh/spirit contrast may not tell us much about heaven, it confirms our previous conclusions about the created realm.

V. *God's Purpose in Creation*

In chapter 3, we discussed the continuity between the old and new covenants in terms of the constant purpose of God. There, we argued that the story of salvation history was always destined to move toward the atonement provided by Christ, who represented the wisdom and purpose of God. We noted the recurrence of phrases of necessity and suitability with regards to the plan and purpose of God, indicating a certain '*logos*' to the world. We established that the old age and covenant was not an aberration, but rather an intended part of salvation history. We also noted in chapter 2 that the wisdom 'hymn' of 1:3 applied most of all to the exalted Christ as the fulfilment of God's purpose for humanity.[37] These aspects of salvation history were also discussed under the heading of God's *logos* for salvation, noting the author's recurrent use of language of speaking. We noted that the speaking of God included Christ, but was not limited to him.

It remains to discuss how this notion of continuity in terms of salvation history might relate to the creation, and correspondingly, what the relationship of Christ might be to creation. We have already noted in this chapter that the author does not speak of a Fall or of any particular cause of the need for redemption from the material world, although it may simply not have been to the author's purpose to mention such on this occasion. The gaps which the author has left in the text probably preclude any certain answering of these kinds of questions.

If we acknowledge that we are engaging in speculation, we can proceed to propose one possible interpretative option which seems to fit with other aspects of the epistle which we have discovered. It is intriguing that the author speaks of the need for redemption 'from the foundation of the world' (9:26). This statement almost seems to imply that the need for atonement is implicitly entailed by corporeality and the created realm. At the same time, however, there

[37]See chapter 2, pp. 57-58

is no blame suggested to God or Christ for creating such an inferior world. Does this in and of itself imply a Fall of some sort?

One way in which the preceding items might coherently fit together develops the idea suggested in the previous chapter, namely, that there is a kind of *logos* to the plot of salvation history in Hebrews. We begin with the observation that the role of Christ in creation is not as clear as one might think it is. Verses such as 1:2 and 10-12 speak of Christ either as the creator of the world or as the agent of creation, but these are the only instances in the epistle where Christ is considered such. In fact, there are some very interesting passages which put a significantly different spin on the question, 2:10 in particular. Here, it is stated that *it was fitting* for God, for whom and *through whom* the All was created, to perfect Jesus through sufferings. As we have discussed in chapter 3, this verse seems to imply a certain *logos* of God in his governance of the creation. It suggests that God was the one for whom the creation exists and that he was the one through whom exists. What is interesting here is the fact that God is the one 'through whom' the universe exists in distinction from Jesus. This use of the phrase 'through whom' is thus interestingly different from the same statement in 1:2, where the phrase refers to Christ.

In 2:10, in distinction from 1:2, *Christ is not connected with the act of creation, but with the purpose of God in creation.* There is something about the way in which God made the world which made it appropriate for Christ to redeem humanity from the death associated with their corporality. While the appropriateness of such salvation could be taken to refer to the desirableness of the *restoration* of God's original intent, it could rather denote the final *fulfilment* of God's purposes. What we mean is that this verse could be taken to imply that God always had Christ in mind as the mediator of salvation for the creation, that the created realm was destined for destruction from its very inception. Christ would thus be the *logos* and wisdom of God in creation more than the actual agent of creation.

The expression 'δι᾽ οὗ' in and of itself seems to reflect a kind of 'metaphysics of prepositions' which was common in our period, being used in places of the 'instrumental' cause of some particular effect.[38] When one applies this usage to Hebrews 1:2 and takes our interpretation of 2:10 into account, an interesting picture begins to form. Christ is indeed the one 'through whom' the worlds

[38]So W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930) 31-37 and T. H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation*, CBQMS 14 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical, 1983) 63f. Tobin notes that phrases such as 'τὸ ὑφ᾽ οὗ' and 'τὸ δι᾽ οὗ', found in writers like Seneca, Aetius, and Varro, were commonplaces used in distinguishing the causes which originally derive from Aristotle. Tobin argues that *Cher.* 125-27 in fact derives from pre-Philonic material. This text speaks of the *logos* as the instrument 'δι᾽ οὗ' the world was created, while God was the one 'ὑφ᾽ οὗ' it was made.

were created, but this is primarily as God's wisdom, his *logos* for the world. Such a construal is supported by the immediate allusion to Wisdom 7:26 which follows, where Christ is related to the wisdom of God. The application of Psalm 102 to Christ, therefore, not only emphasises his everlasting existence but also implies the connection between the Christ who lasts forever and the transient creation whose purpose he completes. The above is at least a possible way of reading the language which speaks of Christ as the agent of creation.

By this reading I do not wish to deny that language with overtones of pre-existence is applied to Christ in the epistle, particularly in the case of 7:3. I do want to emphasise that Christ's relation to creation may be much more profound than that of a simple artificer. In fact, outside of chapter 1, Christ is never spoken of in the role of creator. I have already noted 2:10 where God in distinction from Jesus is the one through whom the All was made. Also in this category is 4:3 where God is said to have rested since the foundation of the world and 11:3, where the worlds are said to have been framed by the ῥῆμα of God. Christ as pre-existent must exist in some way as a function of God, perhaps as his wisdom. Whatever this function may be, however, it implies the real pre-existence of Christ (e.g. 7:3). Jesus while on earth, however, can still seemingly be distinguished in some way from God (2:10). This tension is an intriguing parallel to Christological discussions throughout the centuries.

What I am suggesting, therefore, is that the nature of the creation, its inferiority and destined annihilation may not necessarily be the result of something which has gone awry. Rather, these aspects of the created realm may have served some purpose in God's plan from the foundation of the world, as was the atoning role of Christ as 'high priest' and redeemer. Psalm 8, therefore, can even more strongly be considered both Christological and anthropological. It is at one and the same time understood in both ways, for the destined glory intended for humanity was always planned under the mediation of Christ, for whom the Psalm would apply most fully.

VI. *Conclusion*

This chapter is the most important thus far for our study as a whole in terms of our ultimate goal. It has uncovered several important aspects of the epistle which will be highly significant when in the epilogue we attempt to 'place' Hebrews in terms of its background. Our text-orientated study has, perhaps surprisingly, resulted in a rather consistent picture of the author's conception of the created realm. While the nuances were often subtle, it seems clear that the setting of the created realm has certain clear associations for the author.

In the first place, the created realm is clearly inferior. Its associations are with the old age and the old covenant, with the fleshly and imperfect. It is the realm of physicality where the Devil holds the power of death. We have drawn attention to the importance of Christ's 'life' and living for the author, an often missed key to the author's soteriology. Christ's defeat of death is clearly important for the author. This earth is a place where the people of God can only consider themselves to be foreigners and strangers (11:13). All of these associations, while not marking the created realm as evil, are deprecatory and indicate a clear and innate inferiority.

Another significant aspect of the author's argument is his contention that the created realm will eventually be removed. Many scholars assume that a renewal or replacement with a new heaven and earth will follow, but this is not what the author states. He clearly makes a distinction between the shakeable created realm and the unshakeable dwelling place of God. The former is removed so that the latter can remain. There is no replacement. A clear recognition of the author's perspective on this issue is one of the clearest points at which comparisons can be made with various background material, for this viewpoint contrasts significantly both with Philo and with the majority of apocalyptic texts. We will return to this consideration in the final conclusion.

The author's use of the flesh/spirit distinction also seems instructive. While the only information available on this score must be gleaned from rather sparse material, it seems possible to contruct a picture in which spirit is in general only associated 1) with the sons of God and 2) with the heavenly realm. There is no sense of a spiritual *body* in Hebrews, but the spirit of a person alone seems to be that which relates to heaven. This observation is also highly significant when it comes to the question of background, for it would seem to be a more 'Hellenistic' than 'Jewish' notion.

Finally, perhaps our most unique suggestion in the whole of this study is our speculation as to the function and nature of the creation within the purposes of God. Although we acknowledged that gaps in meaning preclude a full answer to the question, we speculated that God may have planned the redemption of the creation through Christ from the 'foundation of the world' and that Christ can be considered as the agent of the creation most meaningfully in the sense that he functions to bring the created order to the fulness of its purpose. Christ as the wisdom of God in creation can thus be spoken of as the creator. We noted that the epistle is ambivalent in its language of Christ as creator and that however Christ might be pre-existent, he was such as a function of God.

The setting of the created realm, therefore, functions as a part of that matrix of the old covenant which signals its inferiority. There is something innately obstructive about the earthly realm, whether this be the result of some kind of

Fall or whether this is simply an assumption of the author's world view. The heavenly realm, on the other hand, is intrinsically associated with the permanent and complete, the goal of all human existence. The former is an 'opponent' in the structuralist sense, while the latter is the setting for the *denouement*, attained through the help of the story's 'helper', Christ.

CHAPTER 5
The Heavenly Realm

I. *Introduction*

The previous chapter has dealt with certain aspects of the cosmology of Hebrews by an examination of the function of the created realm in the epistle. Of principal importance is the realisation that the epistle envisages the annihilation of the created realm rather than its transformation. Rather than a new heavens and new earth, in Hebrews the earth is removed and the already existent heaven remains.

In addition, the spirit of one who has been perfected is associated with the heavenly realm, while the body seems intrinsically associated with the earthly realm. These factors give an undeniably Hellenistic feel to the epistle and demonstrate significant divergences from both the New Testament and much Jewish literature of the period. We have also noted possible overtones of some sort of *logos* theology on the part of the author, although we have emphasised the differences between the author and Philo.

The purpose of this chapter is to complete the picture of the cosmology of Hebrews by a discussion of heaven and all that is associated with it. Of principal importance is the nature of the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews. As countless proposals have been made about the nature of this structure, it will be important to follow this study's method closely, being careful 1) to approach the question as much as possible from the standpoint of the text before taking recourse to the background literature and 2) to utilise the best insights of the massive literature on the subject.

To this end, the study will proceed by examining the use of the expression τὰ ἅγια in the epistle, demonstrating that in the key passages it is used to refer to the holy of holies. The second and more challenging task is to determine the precise referent of σκηνή in the epistle, with regard to which we will conclude that when the term is unspecified, it usually refers to the tent as a whole. We will propose three viable candidates for the nature of the paradigmatic tent in chapters 8-10, namely, (1) a free standing heavenly tabernacle, (2) one which corresponds to multilayered heavens, and (3) a cosmological interpretation. Even in the midst of testing these models, however, we will begin to sense that the author is using the heavenly tent more as a part of his high priestly metaphor than as a real structure in heaven. Following a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of these three models, the term οὐρανός will be briefly examined for its use in the epistle, concluding that it can refer either to the created

heaven(s) or to the true heaven(s). The existence of a third category of heaven will be left open.

Finally, the chapter will bring together all of the preceding data in order to reach conclusions on the author's use of tabernacle language. It will conclude that while the cosmological and multilayered interpretations of the tent could possibly contribute elements to the author's argument, in the end the tabernacle, as we have argued of the high priesthood of Christ, is used primarily as a rhetorical device within the author's high priestly metaphor. The author uses this language because he believes that it will persuade his listeners of the superiority of the new covenant over the old. What is significant about the heavenly tabernacle is the fact that it exists in heaven as opposed to the created realm and that it provides a paraenetically relevant expression for the presence of God and for sacred space in general.

II. *Τὰ Ἅγια*

The term ἅγιος is used eighteen times in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Of these occurrences, ten refer in some way either to the heavenly or earthly tabernacle or to a part thereof. All of these references use the word in the plural, with the exception of 9:1, where the term τὸ ἅγιον is used of the earthly sanctuary as a whole. Most of the remaining incidences seem to refer to the inner sanctuary of the two part tabernacle, whether it be heavenly or earthly, as the majority of interpreters would agree.[1] It is to this matter that we now turn.

The clearest association between the neuter plural of ἅγιος and the second part of the tabernacle occurs in 9:25. Here it is said that Christ will not offer himself frequently, 'as the high priest enters into τὰ ἅγια yearly with the blood of another'. The reference is clearly to the Day of Atonement as mentioned in conjunction with the 'second tent' in 9:7. Since the high priest is singled out and the reference is to a yearly activity, as in 9:7, it is beyond doubt that τὰ ἅγια refers here to the inner sanctum of the earthly tabernacle.

This fact would seem to imply that ἅγια in the previous verse, 9:24, also refers to the holy of holies in the heavenly tabernacle. Mathias Rissi, however,

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[1]Some of those who believe the term (τὰ) ἅγια to refer consistently to the inner shrine include O. Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19 f. und 10,19 f.* WUNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1972) 57; N. H. Young, 'The Gospel According to Hebrews 9', *NTS* 27 (1981) 198; H. Löhr, 'Thronversammlung und preisender Tempel: Beobachtungen am himmlischen Heiligtum im Hebräerbrief und in den Sabbatopferliedern aus Qumran', *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Welt im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991) 190-91; H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 233 n. 46, 240; etc ... .

has claimed on the contrary that this word designates 'das *ganze* Zeltheiligtum samt allen gottesdienstlichen Geräten darin.'[2] He bases this conclusion both on the absence of the article, present in every other reference to the inner shrine except the dubious 9:3 (referring to the outer part of the tabernacle), and on the fact that the context could be taken to speak of the cleansing of all the heavenly items in correspondence to all the earthly things mentioned in 9:21.

Christ's heavenly act of cleansing, however, is not compared *methodologically* with Moses' sprinkling of 'the book and all the people' (9:10) or of 'the tent and all the vessels of worship' (9:21). *What* Christ cleanses and *how* he cleanses them are logically two different matters. Both 'cleansings' are accomplished through the one entrance of this heavenly high priest into the true holy of holies. This one act of Christ corresponds both to the atonement made for sins on the Day of Atonement and to the initiatory sprinkling of Moses at the inauguration of the first covenant.[3] Given the parallel action in relation to the earthly holy of holies in the following verse (9:25), it seems beyond question that the anarthrous ἅγια of 9:24 also refers strictly to the heavenly holy of holies.[4]

Once ἅγια in 9:24 and 25 is seen as a reference to the inner sanctum, it seems likely that other statements of entrance into τὰ ἅγια also refer to the holy of holies. In 9:12, for example, it is said that Christ entered 'εἰς τὰ ἅγια', having found an eternal redemption. The parallel to 9:7 and 24-25 makes it clear once again that this is the holy of holies. 13:11 similarly speaks of the entrance of the high priest 'εἰς τὰ ἅγια' with the blood of animals,[5] and 10:19

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[2]*Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs: Ihre Verankerung in der Situation des Verfassers und seiner Leser*, WUNT 41 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987) 38. So also E. Riggenbach, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, KNT 14 (Leipzig:Deichert, 1922) 284; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 6th ed., MeyerK 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 323f; O. Kuss *Der Brief an die Hebräer und die katholischen Briefe*, 2nd ed, RNT 8.1 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1966) 125f; A. P. Salom, 'TA AΓIA in the Epistle to the Hebrews' *AUSS* 5 (1967) 64f, 67-69; H-F. Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, MeyerK 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991) 486 n. 46.

[3]As discussed in chapter 2, pp. 69-70, 72-73.

[4]So also Hofius, *Vorhang* 70, and Löhr, 'Thronversammlung' 190-91. A second factor which we will discuss at more length below is the possibility that the author does not think of the heavenly tent as having an outer shrine. In other words, it is at least possible that references to the heavenly tent and references to the heavenly holy of holies are in the end synonymous statements. If such is the case, then Rissi's claim is both valid and invalid at the same time, being valid in the sense that ἅγια would refer to the whole heavenly tent but false in the sense that he thinks this to be an exact representation of the earthly tabernacle, with both outer and inner shrines. We will have to delay discussion of such a possibility until our treatment of 9:24.

[5]Hofius has noted that Hebrews uses the plural here instead of the singular in the text to which the author alludes, Lev. 16:27 ('ὧν τὸ αἷμα εἰσηνέχθη ἐξιλάσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ, ἐξοίσουσιν αὐτὰ ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς καὶ κατακαύσουσιν αὐτὰ ἐν πυρί ...'), indicating a tendency on the author's part to give the plural rather than the singular (*Vorhang* 57 n. 60; So also Löhr, 'Thronversammlung' 191).

encourages the recipients of the epistle also to have boldness in the entrance 'τῶν ἁγίων'. A fairly strong case can clearly be made that the author uses τὰ ἅγια in each of these cases to refer to the inner, most holy part of the tabernacle, whether heavenly or earthly.

The one incidence in which the word clearly refers to the outer tent occurs in 9:2, where the first tent is deemed '"Αγια' in distinction from the second, which is the '"Αγια 'Αγίων'. This reading in itself is actually disputed in the manuscripts[6] but otherwise conforms in general to Old Testament usage, diverging only in its use of the plural instead of the singular.[7] Otfried Hofius suggests that such a change is 'keineswegs ungewöhnlich, da im judengriechischen Sprachgebrauch für das Heilige τὸ ἅγιον und τὰ ἅγια, für das Allerheiligste τὸ ἅγιον τῶν ἁγίων und τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων nebeneinander gebräuchlich sind.'[8] This diversion from the author's usual pattern (taking the reading given) should not be thought overly *significant*, however, because the author is simply following more traditional nomenclature.

The preceding leaves only one other instance where the meaning of τὰ ἅγια might be in question, namely in 8:2, where Christ is said to be 'a minister τῶν ἁγίων and of the true tent, which the Lord pitched, not a human.' This verse serves as a good transition to the following section, which deliberates the exact meaning of σκηνή in the epistle. Following the precedent established above, it would seem reasonable to take τὰ ἅγια here as another reference to the holy of holies, where Christ enters to offer atonement and is seated at the right hand of God. To what, however, does the 'true tent' refer? Is this expression a hendiadys, with the two words both referring either to the tent as a whole or to the holy of holies? In the end, we will suggest that for the author, the heavenly tent and the heavenly holy of holies are simply varying images for the same heavenly realm through which and into which Christ has ascended. It is to the meaning of the tent in Hebrews that we now turn.

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[6]See Attridge's proposed interpretation of the older manuscript evidence which is more in keeping with the typical usage elsewhere in Hebrews (*Hebrews* 233-34, 236-238). He takes the reading of *p*46 (ἅγια ἁγίων and ἅγια?, i.e. the reverse of the usual text) as the original and proposes an interpretation of Numbers 4:17-20 which might justify such a construal. The exact reading, however, is not a problem for our interpretation.

[7]We have already noted that the author has done this in 13:11 (see above, n. 5).

[8]*Vorhang* 56-57. Hofius here follows G. Schrenk, 'ἱερος κτλ.', *TDNT* 3, ed. by G. Kittel, trans. by G. W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 234, who notes that Philo can use τὰ ἅγια of everything in the temple precincts (*Det.* 62; *Fug.* 93; *Leg. All.* 3.135; *Som.* 1.207; *Spec. Leg.* 1.115; *Vit. Mos.* 2.114, 155) or of the first sanctuary (*Her.* 226; *Spec. Leg.* 1.296), while the holy of holies is also plural when depicted as τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων (*Leg. All.* 2.56; *Mut.* 192).

III. *Ἡ Σκηνή*

A vast quantity of ink has been spilt over the question of what the author understands the heavenly tabernacle to be in Hebrews. In due course we will need to explore the various suggestions which have been made. In keeping with our attempt to answer such questions primarily on the basis of the text, it will be desirable to approach the question by an analysis of the various occurrences of σκηνή in the text. Such an examination will eliminate outright some of the more fanciful interpretations while raising a more limited number of plausible options. In the end, we will suggest three which seem to be able to account reasonably for the relevant verses in chapters 8-10.

To begin with, there are a number of incidences where the exact nature of that to which the author refers seems quite clear.[9] When the author speaks of Moses 'about to erect the tent', for example, he most likely refers to the entire earthly tabernacle (8:5), as he does in 9:21 when he speaks of Moses sprinkling the tent in inauguration.[10] It would therefore seem likely that 13:10 also refers to the service of the whole earthly tabernacle[11] and that 8:2 refers to the whole heavenly tent.[12]

The use of σκηνή in 9:2, 3, and 6 requires more discussion. Although 9:2 and 6 might seem to use πρώτη unambiguously to refer to the first part of the tabernacle *as a first tent*, and 9:3's use of 'after the second veil' would seem to indicate a similar reference to the holy of holies *as a second tent*, this conclusion has been called into question by Hofius and others.[13] Hofius has claimed that language such as that of Hebrews is not without precedence, noting Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.193-95, where he speaks of the 'δεύτερον ἱερόν' in reference to the court of the Gentiles as opposed to the outermost court.[14]

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[9]While 11:9 may have overtones of the transience of the earthly tent while waiting for a true home, it clearly speaks of the tents in which the patriarchs camped and thus is not included in the study below.

[10]If 9:21 refers only to the outer tent, then Moses would not have been said to sprinkle the holy of holies in inauguration. Further, the ὑποδείγματα of the realities in the heavens in 9:23 (which is reminiscent of 8:5) seem not only to include the inner sanctum (as is implied in 9:24) but to point to it more than anything else, as we shall claim below.

[11]H. Koester would be a rare exception to this interpretation, since he takes this reference in its 'direct meaning' to refer to the 'outer part of the tabernacle of the wilderness (=πρώτη σκηνή 9.2,6), never the tabernacle as a whole!' ('Outside the Camp', *HTR* 55 [1962] 309). As we shall see, exactly the opposite seems to be the case.

[12]There is less agreement on this point, as we shall see below.

[13]Hofius, *Vorhang* 61, and more recently Attridge, *Hebrews* 232, and W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* Word Biblical (Dallas: Word Books, 1991) 219.

[14]As opposed to the outermost court ('τοῦ πρώτου' 5.195). Josephus, therefore, does not refer here to the two 'houses' (5.208) of the temple!

Hofius concludes that the phrase in Hebrews, therefore, has the idiomatic sense of 'der zweite Teil (Raum) des Zeltes' rather than 'the second tent'. Hebrews does not, in his opinion, refer to the two parts of the tabernacle as two *separate* entities, but simply to the first and second parts of the *one* tabernacle, thereby making cosmological interpretations of the tabernacle less likely.

It should be noted, however, that in 9:3 the adjective 'second' does not actually modify the word *tent*.[15] Rather, the author simply states that after the second veil, there was 'a tent, namely, the one which was called "holy of holies"'. Even the word order (as in 9:2 of the first tent) is arranged in such a way as to highlight the fact that these are two tents, placing σκηνή first on its own, in order to set the argument up for the conclusion to come in 9:8![16] That this is the case is definitively shown in 9:3, since the author refers to the holy of holies as a tent in its own right (not as the 'second tent'). Even the so called idiom in Josephus is not unambiguous. It is not used, for example, of the inner and outer parts of the sanctuary. In the end, it seems more likely that the author is deliberately referring to the two parts of the tabernacle as a first tent and a second tent, each in their own right, in order to prepare for the argument he will make in verse 8.

The author's use of σκηνή, therefore, seems fairly straightforward in a number of instances. The above occurrences alone demonstrate that the author can use the term either of the individual sections of the earthly tent or of the tabernacle as a whole, although when unqualified it tends to refer to the structure as a whole. The interpretations of the two remaining references, however, have been strongly debated. Two of the major interpretations of the tabernacle have their respective strongholds in these two verses. A close examination of each verse, therefore, will hopefully begin to delimit the interpretative options.

A. Hebrews 9:8

We have already had occasion in chapter 2 to discuss the exact meaning of the 'first tent' in 9:8.[17] We noted that Lincoln Hurst has wanted to take this verse as a reference to the first, earthly tent as a whole, rather than as that which the immediate context seems to suggest, namely, the first tent in the two part

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[15]As even Attridge notes, *Hebrews* 232 n. 27.

[16]The normal attributive construction would place an article on σκηνή as well: 'ἡ σκηνὴ ἡ λεγομένη Ἅγια Ἁγίων'.

[17]See chapter 2, pp. 67-68.

tabernacle.[18] B. F. Westcott's claim could have been mentioned here when he notes that 'it is difficult to suppose that it [σκηνή] should be suddenly used in another sense' when it has just referred to the Holy Place.[19] We similarly concluded in chapter 2 not only that this was in fact the reference, but that Hurst's interpretation actually missed much of the point of the author's argumentation in the first place.

The contrast in 9:6-7 is between the continual ministry of the regular priests in the outer tent and the once a year entry of the high priest into the second tent. The author makes this spatial distinction into an eschatological contrast between the first covenant, with its multiplicity of sacrifice and imperfection, and the second one, with its one time offering leading to perfection. The first tent can be said to be a parable of this present age, which involves multiplicity and imperfection (and, in fact, the whole of the earthly tent anyway), while the 'one time' nature of the new age is also implied by the second, inner sanctuary. Such a reading explains why the author says that the way *into the holy of holies* ('τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδόν'), the second part of the tabernacle,[20] is not apparent while the 'first tent', the outer tent, has status. This interpretation also explains why the author speaks of the tabernacle as being composed of a 'first' and 'second' tent in the first place.[21] Hurst's explanation cannot account for the train of thought nearly as well.[22]

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[18]*The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1990), 26-27; as also J. Moffatt (probably), *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924) 117-18; J. Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 1970 [1954]) 74; A. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspectives* (St Meinrad, IN: Grail, 1960) 147-48; and F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 194-95.

[19]*The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903) 252. Others who have seen the immediate reference of 'first tent' as the first part of the tabernacle include S. G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews: A Comparison of the Interpretation of the Old Testament in Philo Judaeus and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Richmond: John Knox, 1965) 94-95; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University, 1969) 148; G. Theissen, *Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief* SNT 2 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1969) 69-70; Hofius, *Vorhang* 62; G. MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews' *Semeia* 12 (1978) 189; Attridge, *Hebrews* 240; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 223; Weiss 457.

[20]As we have argued in the preceding section, τὰ ἅγια regularly refers to the inner sanctum.

[21]So also C. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, CBQMS 22 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical, 1989) 158: '[B]y using these words the author was able to associate the first and second parts of the tabernacle with the first and second covenants'. Hurst's construal misses the significance of this nomenclature.

[22]How, for example, does the basic distinction between the respective functioning of the two parts of the tabernacle lead *in the argument of chapter 9* to the conclusion that the way into the heavenly holy of holies is not apparent while the whole earthly tent possesses status (or is existent). Our reading, on the other hand, naturally leads to such a 'parabolic' conclusion.

There are, therefore, two principal levels of meaning in 9:8-9. The first is the plain reference to the first and second halves of the two part earthly tabernacle. The second and parabolic meaning is eschatological. The two tents represent the two ages and the two covenants. Access into God's presence was not possible in the old age or under the old covenant.[23] As long as the old age and covenant are afforded the status the recipients seem to be tempted to give it, the way into the holy of holies is not apparent.[24]

It is important to note the way in which the author formulates this contrast between the two ages. In the former age, the cultic ministry had not been able to perfect the worshipper in terms of their consciousness of sins[25] but had rather consisted of 'ordinances of flesh' (9:10). *The author's primary interest is not in the structure of the tabernacle,* whether heavenly or earthly. Rather, the author is interested in humanity reaching their appropriate state in relation to God, which is full acceptability and access to his presence.

The author, nevertheless, assumes certain things about the two ages and two tabernacles in his contrast. The domain of the earthly tabernacle is the realm of flesh, in conjunction with our findings in chapter 4 that the old age is associated throughout with the created realm and with flesh. The domain of the true holy of holies, on the other hand, is the realm of spirit, as we have shown in the previous chapter. This is the domain in which God's presence dwells.[26]

This way of thinking on the part of the author at least suggests another possible dimension to the contrast between the outer and inner courts of the tabernacle, although one about which we may not be able to form an ultimate conclusion. It has sometimes been proposed that at times the author incorporates a cosmological interpretation of the tabernacle into his argument.[27]

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[23]As Hofius has noted, *Vorhang* 63, one is reminded of statements such as that of Josephus in *Ant.* 3.181: 'τὴν δὲ τρίτην μοῖραν μόνῳ περιέγραψε τῷ θεῷ διὰ τὸ καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεπίβατον εἶναι ἀνθρώποις'. So also Philo in *Vita Mos.* 2.95 locates the ark 'ἐν ἀδύτῳ καὶ ἀβάτῳ τῶν κατοπετασμάτων εἴσω'.

[24]I accept Attridge's observation that the phrase 'ἔχειν στάσις' is somewhat of an idiom for having a certain status or honour (*Hebrews* 240, n. 127), as seen in references such as Plato's *Phaedr.* 253D and Epictetus' *Diss.* 1.21.1. As I will argue below, however, the ultimate way in which the old age will lose its 'standing' is in its conclusion.

[25]For a justification of this translation of συνείδησις, see chapter 3, p. 103 and n. 54, as well as chapter 4, n. 30.

[26]So also C. Koester, *Dwelling* 158-59.

[27]Those who think that the two part tabernacle may (at least at certain points in the author's argument) be analogous to the cosmos in some way include D. A. Seeberg, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1912) 96; R. Gyllenberg, 'Die Christologie des Hebräerbriefes', *ZSTh* 11 (1934) 675; E. Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 [1957]) 209, 223f; F.

Such an understanding sees the earthly tabernacle as a representation of the cosmos as a whole and is well summed up by Josephus:

> εἰ γὰρ τις τῆς σκηνῆς κατανοήσειε τὴν πῆξιν καὶ τοῦ ἱερέως ἴδοι τὴν στολὴν τά τε σκεύη ... , τόν τε νομοθέτην εὑρήσει θεῖον ἄνδρα ... . ἕκαστα γὰρ τούτων εἰς ἀπομίμησιν καὶ διατύπωσιν τῶν ὅλων ... . τήν τε γὰρ σκηνὴν τριάκοντα πηχῶν οὖσαν νείμας εἰς τρία καὶ δύο μέρη πᾶσιν ἀνεὶς τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ὥσπερ βέβηλόν τινα καὶ κοινὸν τόπον, τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἀποσημαίνει· καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα πᾶσίν ἐστιν ἐπίβατα· τὴν δὲ τρίτην μοῖραν μόνῳ περιέγραψε τῷ θεῷ διὰ τὸ καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεπίβατον εἶναι ἀνθρώποις (*Ant.* 3.180-81).[28]

This cosmological interpretation sees the outer court as representing the earth (or the earth and the sea in Josephus' rendition), while the inner court refers to that heaven where God dwells. The veil, therefore, comes to represent the boundary between earth and heaven.[29]

Philo also uses this model, although he expands it to include the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal. In *Questions on Exodus* 2.94 he writes,

> the simple holy [parts of the tabernacle] are classified with the sense-perceptible heaven, whereas the inner [parts], which are called the holy of holies, [are classified] with the intelligible world. The incorporeal world is set off and separated from the visible one by the mediating Logos as by a veil.[30]

These two variant understandings of the tabernacle as a representation of the universe suggest a roughly contemporary scheme which is one of several backgrounds which have been proposed as an explanation for Hebrews' use of tabernacle motif.

By way of evaluation, however, Philo's 'cosmological' tabernacle is in some ways quite different from what is found in Hebrews. Philo notes, for example,

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J. Schierse, *Verheissung und Heilsvollendung: Zur theologischen Grundfrage des Hebräerbriefes*, MThS.H 9 (München: Zink, 1955) 168ff.; H. Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Black, 1964) 136-37; Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 106f; Kuss, *Hebräer* 115ff.; F. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1968) 230; Theissen, *Untersuchungen* 105; MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 184-85, 187-88; and C. Koester, *Dwelling* 174-75, 178-182.

[28]See also *Ant.* 3.123 and in Philo, *Vita Mos.* 2.88; *Spec. Leg.* 1.66.

[29]So MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 185, notes that Clement of Alexandria speaks of the veil as the midpoint between heaven and earth (*Strom.* 5.6).

[30]Taken from Ralph Marcus' translation in the Loeb Classical Library series, *Philo*, Supplement 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1953) 142-43. See also *Som.* 1.215 where the rational soul is said to be another kind of temple belonging to God, in addition to the universe.

that the part of the cosmos within the veil is 'without transient events'.[31] Such a realm of intransience, while analogous in some ways to the permanence associated with the heavenly realm in Hebrews, is quite foreign, on the other hand, to the place where Christ offers his one time sacrifice for sins.[32] Events simply do not *take place* in a realm of eternal archetypes.

The general cosmological scheme of Josephus, on the other hand, also found in Philo, may hold more promise in elucidating what may further have been in the author's mind when he formulated his argument on the basis of the two tent division. Although the cosmological model has sometimes been proposed as an explication for certain parts of the author's argument, including 9:1-10,[33] the connection between such an understanding and the future destruction of the created realm often has not been made explicit, even by those who see cosmological overtones in Hebrews' use of the tabernacle motif.[34] As we have indicated in the preceding chapter,[35] the author of Hebrews believes that the created realm, both heavens and earth, is destined to be shaken and removed at the 'time of reformation', leaving only the unshakeable heaven. In this light, an allusion to a cosmological tabernacle, in which the forecourt represented the created realm and the holy of holies the unshakeable heaven, would bring significantly appropriate nuances to some of the author's statements. In particular, the claim that the way into the holy of holies is not apparent while the first tent 'ἐχούσης στάσιν' takes on added significance.

Harold Attridge and others have noted that this is an idiom which means to have a certain status or honour.[36] The author's principal meaning, once again, is the eschatological and, thereby, paraenetic. The recipients are tempted to

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[31]*Quest. Ex.* 2.91 (Loeb 140).

[32]As noted by Hurst, *Background* 33f.

[33]MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 187-88, sees it behind 9:24; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 174, 178, in 9:24 and also with the realms of being in 9:8-10. Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 106-110, and Montefiore, *Hebrews* 149, also connect it with 9:1-10. Käsemann sees the distinction implicit in the mention of the veil in 6:19; 9:3; and 10:20, *Wandering* 209, 223. Schierse, *Verheissung* 62-63 comes closest to our interpretation.

[34]Schierse, *Verheissung* 52 and Montefiore, *Hebrews* 149, seem to imply as much.

[35]See chapter 4, p. 126-27.

[36]See note 24. References such as Polybius' *Hist.* 5.5.3 and Plutarch's *Quaest. conv.* 8.9.1 (731B — σύστασις) show the close relationship between existence and standing. The first speaks of certain winds having reached sailing force and the second speaks of diseases coming into existence and *becoming established.*

continue to grant an established status to the Levitical cultus in some way,[37] but the author insists that true entrance into God's presence cannot actually take place while this is the case. His audience must leave aside their former values and affirm a new paradigm of what is honourable.[38]

This primary emphasis does not, however, preclude wider implications to this statement, as is sometimes assumed, particularly in the light of the author's theology in general. The author not only believes that the Levitical cultus should no longer hold a high status in the minds of the readers. He also believes that its existence is destined to come to an end, as he believes the created realm will. The removal of the created heavens and earth is the final termination of the old order and is thus concurrent with the full arrival of the new age and the final entrance of the people of God into rest. It would therefore be completely consistent with the author's theology in general if he were to say that the final entrance of the perfected into God's presence cannot be accomplished while the created realm has existence. The way into the true holy of holies, into heaven itself, into God's promised rest and heavenly homeland, is not apparent while the created realm of flesh continues to exist. When the created realm is removed, on the other hand, full access for those spirits who have been perfected will be possible. Such overtones do not say anything which we have not already established in the author's thought but rather substantiate our previous interpretations. This line of thought is so similar to the author's theology in general that it seems a strong possibility that such a meaning was in his mind, even if he did not bring it to full expression.[39]

It is also possible that these kinds of overtones support other comments which the author makes. Why, for example, does the author speak of the tabernacle in terms of 'the present time' in 9:9? He has elsewhere gone to lengths to point out the 'presentness' of the new covenant and the already effected obsolescence of the old covenant. The ever present reminder of the foreign, earthly world fits in

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[37]It is not strictly the purpose of this dissertation to elucidate the situation of the recipients. Surely all interpreters would agree, however, that the author's argument against the Levitical cultus as an inferior means into God's presence has *some* practical purpose in the author's mind.

[38]For a stimulating look at Hebrews using the anthropological categories of honour and shame, see D. A. Desilva's 'Despising Shame: A Cultural-Anthropological Investigation of the Epistle to the Hebrews', *JBL* 113 (1994) 439-461.

[39]As mentioned in the introduction (p. 21f.), the possibility must be borne in mind that the author's theology may have differed in significant respects from that of his recipients. Such a situation could make it desirable for the author not to express his thinking fully. For one attempt at working out such a hypothesis, see MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple'.

well with the realisation that, in the end, the new covenant has not yet arrived in its fulness.[40]

Other resonances which Hebrews 9:1-10 could have with a cosmological reading of the outer tent should be noted. First of all, the author's use of κοσμικόν in 9:1 establishes beyond question that the author associates the wilderness tabernacle with the created realm. The author specifically wishes to define this shadowy tent in terms of its association with this world.[41] Much more tenuous, but worth noting, is the fact that both Philo and Josephus have a tendency to see the vessels in the forecourt symbolically. For Josephus, for example, the lampstand and twelve breads in the Jerusalem temple represent respectively the seven planets and the zodiac.[42] For Philo, the lampstand also stands for the planets (*Her.* 221) and the sense-perceptible heaven (*Quest. Ex.* 2.73, 95), while the table represents sense-perceptible and body-like substance (*Quest. Ex.* 2.69, 95). In both of these cases, the items in the outer court are intentionally related to the corporeal, physical world.

It is difficult to make much of this possible symbolism, however, not least because of the fact that the author places the altar of incense within the holy of holies. While the cherubim and ark of the covenant can easily be taken as representive of the throne of God and the angels who surround it, the inclusion of the altar of incense has long been controverted. Attridge has suggested that it is possible to read Numbers 18 in such a way as to see the altar of incense in the holy of holies,[43] while Craig Koester has hypothesised a 'hidden vessels' tradition which may have considered the altar of incense to be hidden along with the ark and tent, waiting to be revealed at a future time.[44] Neither of these explanations relates very well to a cosmological reading of the tabernacle. The fact that the author is not able to speak about such things 'κατὰ μέρος', while perhaps principally referring to the hundreds of years since these items were in

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[40]It has often been pointed out that the author's use of the present tense in verses like 9:9 do not necessarily indicate that the Jerusalem temple had not yet been destroyed (e. g. Attridge, *Hebrews* 8, who notes the present tense in *Ant.* 4.102-87, 224-57; *1 Clem.* 40; *Diogn.* 3). The author's association of the 'ideal' earthly cultus as typical of an age which has not fully come to a conclusion (because the created realm still exists) might further help explain this pattern.

[41]Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 108-9, however, goes too far when he interprets τὸ ἅγιον κοσμικὸν as 'the tabernacle with its cosmic symbolism'. Hofius, on the other hand, may limit the meaning too much when he sees it as equivalent to ἐπίγειος (*Vorhang* 61). It may imply more broadly that it was the tent within the created world in general.

[42]*War* 5.217.

[43]*Hebrews* 236-38.

[44]*Dwelling* 175-77.

existence,[45] may also warn against pressing the symbolism too far. Such allegorising was not on the author's agenda at this point.

Before concluding our discussion of 9:8, it will be significant to note the general tenor of the author's argument with regard to the outer part of the sanctuary. As far as the earthly tabernacle is concerned, the outer sanctum is associated with multiplicity and imperfection. It can be used to refer to the old covenant in a parable in which the presence of God is obscured by its 'standing'. As is the case with the veil, there would seem to be little use for an outer tent in the heavenly sanctuary. It would make little sense to include things which were symbolic hindrances to God's presence in a theology which has as its basic point the access of the perfected to God's presence in the heavenly holy of holies. This point is worth bearing in mind in the following discussions.

It should be reiterated, then, that the principal meaning of the reference to the outer tent in 9:8 is eschatological and directed against the Levitical priesthood and earthly cultus in general. The author reinforces his point with flesh/conscience imagery in 9:9-10, parabolically associating the outer tent with the fleshly and the inner sanctum with the realm of spirit. The author does not make further cosmological claims explicit, but it would not be an unreasonable conjecture that they were in his mind, although this cannot be established with certainty. At the very least they would be consistent with the imagery he does make explicit. It remains for the rest of the study to substantiate, qualify, or negate the presence of such cosmological overtones in the author's use of tabernacle imagery.

B. Hebrews 9:11

One of the most controverted of all references to the tabernacle in Hebrews occurs in 9:11-12. Hurst has wisely warned that '[t]he interpretation of this verse [9:11] is so contentious it would be hazardous to build *any* theory on it.'[46] These verses state that

> Christ, having arrived as a high priest of good things which have come to pass,[47] through the greater and more perfect tent, not one made with hands (that is, not of this creation), nor through the blood of bulls and

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[45]Many interpreters see 9:5 as a conscious avoidance of allegorising on the part of the author, but the presence of νῦν may rather imply that the factor precluding detailed discussion was the passage of so much time since these items actually existed.

[46]*Background* 27 (italics his).

[47]I have already argued that the reading γενομένων is more likely the original here in the light of 10:1 (see chapter 3, n. 93).

> goats, but through his own blood, he entered once and for all into the sanctuary, having found an eternal redemption.

The principal difficulty in interpreting these two verses is the meaning of διά in the phrase, 'through the greater and more perfect tent'. On the one hand, a number of interpreters take this preposition instrumentally,[48] yielding the somewhat awkward sense that Christ, by means of the greater tent, entered into the holy of holies. The majority of scholars, on the other hand, take the διά locally in parallel to verses like 4:14 and 7:26,[49] drawing various implications such as the existence of a multilayered heaven[50] or a mere reference to passage through the outer tent of a real heavenly tabernacle.[51] The wide diversity of interpretations based upon this verse demonstrates that it is dangerous ground on which to build any particular understanding of the heavenly tabernacle. The major interpretative options, however, must be explored in turn.

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[48]Some of those who take διά instrumentally include a number of those who see the greater and more perfect tent as the glorified (A. Vanhoye, '"Par la Tent plus grande et plus parfaite ..." (He 9,11)', *Bib* 46 [1965] 1ff) or eucharistic body of Christ (J. Swetnam, "'The Greater and More Perfect Tent.'" A Contribution to the Discussion of Hebrews 9,11' *Bib* 47 [1966] 91ff), his whole humanity (Schierse, *Verheissung* 57; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary* 161; F. Laub, *Bekenntnis und Auslegung: Die paränetische Funcktion der Christologie im Hebräerbrief*, BU 15 [Regensburg: Pustet, 1980] 190), or even the church as the body of Christ (Westcott, *Hebrews* 260). Many of these interpretations introduce foreign elements into the text of Hebrews. The parallel use of χειροποίητος in 9:11 and 9:24 demonstrates that Christ enters this heavenly tabernacle not made with hands. It cannot, therefore, be any of these preceding suggestions. There have been several others, however, who have read διά instrumentally with more likely interpretations of the tabernacle, including Montefiore (*Hebrews* 152-53), Young ('Gospel' 202-5), R. McL. Wilson (*Hebrews*, New Century [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 150), and C. Koester (*Dwelling* 161-62).

[49]The majority of scholars this century seem to have found this option the most plausible one, including Riggenbach 220f, 258f, Moffatt, *Hebrews* 120; Michel, *Hebräer* 310-11; C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 256; Héring 76; Käsemann, *Wandering* 228 n. 159; H. Koester, 'Outside' 309; Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 110-11; Kuss, *Hebräer* 117f; Schröger, *Verfasser* 237f; Theissen, *Untersuchungen* 105; P. Andriessen, 'Das größere und vollkommenere Zelt (Hebr 9,11)', *BZ* 15 (1971); Hofius, *Vorhang* 56, 67; D. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982) 143-44; J. W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*, CBQMS 13 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical, 1982) 106; H. Braun, *An die Hebräer*, HNT 14 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1984) 265; Rissi, *Theologie* 39; Attridge, *Hebrews* 245-247; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 237-38; J. M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTSS 49 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991) 63; Weiss, *Hebräer* 465-467; M. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTSS 73 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992) 210; P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 450; E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 7,1-10,18)*, EKK 17.2 (Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1993) 145-48.

[50]E.g. Riggenbach, Gyllenberg, Moffatt, Michel, Héring, Käsemann, H. Koester, Kuss, Schröger, Andriessen, Peterson, Lane, and Isaacs.

[51]Especially Hofius, Rissi, and Scholar.

1. The local reading

The awkward sense which seems to result from taking διά instrumentally has already been mentioned above. It has generally been felt that a local reading, on the other hand, yields a much smoother sense which also precludes any need to take the tent here metaphorically.[52] When 9:11 is compared to statements like 4:14, for example, which states that Christ is a great high priest 'διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανούς', or 7:26, which states that Christ is a fitting high priest 'ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος', it has been possible to make a straightforward correlation between certain conjectured 'lower heavens' and the outer part of the heavenly sanctuary, giving a seemingly smooth reading to 9:11-12: Christ, (passing) through the heavenly tent (these lower heavens), entered into the heavenly holy of holies (the highest heaven(s) where God's throne is). This parallel with 4:14, which appears in a high priestly context and includes the preposition διά, along with the better sense which the sentence as a whole seems to have, are the principal reasons why there is a growing consensus that the word here is local.[53]

Although not all scholars who see the διά locally also make a correlation between the lower heavens and the outer part of the heavenly sanctuary, the majority of them at least find such a suggestion plausible. One of the earliest and most well expressed presentations of such an interpretation is to be found in Otto Michel's commentary, first published in 1936. He writes,

> Strenggenommen müßten wir also zwischen dem Bereich der Schöpfung (κτίσις), des Zeltes (σκηνή) und des Heiligtums (ἅγια) unterscheiden: Christus war auf Erden Glied der Schöpfung, durchschritt bei der Auffahrt das Zelt und brachte im Allerheiligsten das Opfer vor Gott. κτίσις, σκηνή, ἅγια sind also Sphären, die einander ablösen. Eigentlich müßte man im Hebr auch einen dreifachen Sprachgebrauch vom "Himmel" unterscheiden: 1. die Himmel, die zu dieser Schöpfung gehören und deshalb vergänglich sind (1$_{10-12}$); 2. die Himmel, durch die Christus hindurchschreitet (4$_{14}$ 9$_{10-12}$); 3. den Himmel als den eigentlichen Wohnort der Gottheit (9$_{24}$).[54]

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[52]So Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 236. He alludes, of course, to many of the scholars mentioned in note 48 who do not take the passage in a straightforward manner. Lane also contests, as we shall see below, that the local reading fits better into the sense of the basic sentence, 'when Christ appeared, ... he entered' (229).

[53]So Ellingworth, *Hebrews* 450, 'There seems little doubt, following extensive discussion, that διὰ τῆς ... σκηνῆς is local'.

[54]*Hebräer* 311-12.

This statement by Michel is perhaps the clearest expression of that interpretation of 9:11-12 which takes διά locally and relates it to the various senses which οὐρανός seems to have in the epistle. If the cosmological reading of the tabernacle finds an easy foothold in 9:8-9, the view which believes the tent to relate in some way to various heavenly spheres most easily springs from these verses. Those who hold to this interpretation, which would seem to be the largest group of interpreters, point out that this tent through which Christ passes is 'οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως', a statement which is sometimes used to argue against the cosmological interpretation, since it views the creation as the outer part of the paradigmatic tabernacle.[55]

While there are a few minor variations of Michel's construal, most interpretations in this category have this same basic cosmological structure and the same basic correlation to the earthly tent. Eduard Riggenbach, for example, has a different focus, but the same basic structure and correlation.[56] Paul Andriessen supposes that the 'greater and more perfect tent' might be the heaven which the angels inhabit, but this heaven is still to be equated with the 'heavens' of 4:14.[57] In addition, most of these interpretations view the 'greater and more perfect tent' as the *outer* part of the heavenly tabernacle, while the highest heaven is reserved for God as the heavenly τὰ ἅγια.[58]

There would seem to be at least three significant qualifications which should be made, however, if one is to opt for the local reading. The first is the fact that σκηνή in 9:11 quite probably refers to the *entirety* of the heavenly tabernacle and not merely to its first compartment. We have already argued above that σκηνή in Hebrews usually refers to the whole tabernacle, with the exception of the occurrences in 9:1-10, where the word is clearly qualified in the context. It would therefore seem likely that the whole heavenly tabernacle is also in view here, since there is no indication to the contrary. Although some have claimed that the reference to the outer tent in the preceding verses makes possible a similar meaning here in regard to the heavenly tabernacle,[59] a continuity of this

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[55]As, for example, Michel himself points out, *Hebräer* 312. One could also argue this point from 8:5, which seems to see a pattern for the *whole* earthly tabernacle in what at least seems to be its *heavenly* type. There are possible ways of explaining these factors which we will give later in the chapter, but they are indeed the strongest arguments against a cosmological reading of the tabernacle.

[56]As discussed by Hofius, *Vorhang* 50-52. Rather than focus on the relationship between the 'two tents' in heaven like Michel, Riggenbach emphasises the nether heavens as representing a mere approach to God, as opposed to the 'Wohnsitz Gottes' itself.

[57]'Zelt' 85-6.

[58]H. Koester has even gone so far as to say that σκηνή is *never* used in Hebrews to depict the tabernacle as a whole, a claim which we have already disputed. See note 11 and 'Outside' 309.

[59]E.g. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 230, who translates σκηνή here as 'compartment'.

sort is far from evident. For one thing, there is a μέν/δέ correlation which exists between 9:1 and 9:11,[60] demonstrating that 9:11 begins the second half of a contrast of the *whole* heavenly sanctuary with the whole 'ἅγιον κοσμικόν' of 9:1. By introducing the whole 'greater and more perfect tent' at the very start of the new section, the author effectively indicates that the whole tent of the new covenant is superior to the earthly tabernacle.

Hofius has also argued a general correlation between σκηνή in Hebrews and the whole of the tabernacle on the basis of expressions in Leviticus 16.[61] He has pointed out the phraseological similarity between the statement in 8:2 that Christ is a 'τῶν ἁγίων λειτουργὸς καὶ τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς' and phrases in Leviticus used of the Day of Atonement, arguing that this phrase is not a hendiadys as is often assumed.[62] Lev. 16:20, for example, states that the high priest 'συντελέσει ἐξιλασκόμενος τὸ ἅγιον καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου'.[63] Lev. 16:16 and 16:33 also refer to τὸ ἅγιον in distinction from ἡ σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου. We know from Hebrews 13:11 (and 6:19)[64] that the author was acquainted with this chapter and that he understood τὸ ἅγιον to refer to the holy of holies (Leviticus 16:17 would also make this clear).

Unfortunately, while Hofius is probably correct, his argument is not as convincing or as definitive as one might think. While the precedents in Leviticus, on the one hand, might indicate that this phrase is not a straightforward hendiadys, it is not completely certain, on the other, how the author of Hebrews would have understood the phrase ἡ σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου in Lev. 16. As Riggenbach's interpretation demonstrates, it would not be difficult to see this phrase as a reference solely to the outer part of the tabernacle (e.g. Lev. 16:23).[65] In fact, the LXX in this chapter refers to the 'tent of

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[60]So, for example, Michel, *Hebräer* 304f, 309; Hofius, *Vorhang* 65; Young, 'Gospel' 202; Thompson, *Beginnings* 104-5; Attridge, *Hebrews* 238 n. 103; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 161; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 229; Scholar, *Priests* 159; Weiss, *Hebräer* 462; and Ellingworth, *Hebrews* 448.

[61]*Vorhang* 57, 59-60.

[62]Some of those who take the καὶ epexegetically include Westcott, *Hebrews* 216; Riggenbach, *Hebräer* 220-31; Moffatt, *Hebrews* 105; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2.234; Michel, *Hebräer* 288; Bruce, *Hebrews* 161; Peterson, *Perfection* 130; Lane *Hebrews 1-8* 200.

[63]For Hebrews' tendency to make τὸ ἅγιον plural in reference to the holy of holies, see note 5.

[64]Young, 'Gospel' 199 n. 12.

[65]*Hebräer* 220 n. 13.

witness' primarily in order to include the Holy Place *in addition to* the holy of holies in the cleansing ritual, making Riggenbach's reading quite plausible.[66]

What would seem to be decisive in Hofius' favour is the fact that σκηνή in 8:5 almost without question refers to the whole earthly tent, as we have already suggested. Moses is about to erect the tent and is instructed to make 'πάντα' according to the type shown him on the mountain, which implies at the very least that the holy of holies was included in the pattern.[67] Once this conclusion is accepted, it is only logical to assume that the author is using σκηνή in the same general sense in 8:2, since they both occur in the same general context. If the author had understood the phrase in Leviticus 16 to refer only to the outer court, he would have surely used σκηνή consistently in Hebrews to refer only to the Holy Place. As we have seen, however, exactly the opposite is the case.

There is another possibility which would reconcile both those who take the καί in 8:2 epexegetically and Hofius, who sees σκηνή as a reference to the whole tent. We have already mentioned the possibility that the author does not refer to the heavenly tent in terms of an outer sanctum. If this were the case, then the ultimate referent of σκηνή would be both the whole tent and the heavenly holy of holies as well. We will consider this possibility more fully under our discussion of 9:24 below. In the end, we will argue that the author does not make careful distinctions between the two expressions with regard to the heavenly tent because he uses this language metaphorically to refer to the unshakeable heavenly realm in general.

The preceding arguments do not of course preclude the local sense of διά or even the general interpretation of Michel. Just as the phrase 'tent of witness' in Leviticus 16 refers to the whole tent primarily to include the outer compartment in the atonement, one could suggest that σκηνή is used to include the lower heavens through which Christ passed. A few adjustments to the interpretation, nevertheless, follow from the preceding conclusion. One must, for example, allow that when the author states that Christ entered the holy of holies through the greater and more perfect tent, he does not mean to imply 'daß Christus die σκηνή wieder verlassen habe, um εἰς τὰ ἅγια zu gelangen.'[68] Hofius even goes so far as to claim that 4:14 does not necessarily imply that Christ passed

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[66]Lev. 16.16, on the other hand, which states that the tent of witness was placed 'among them in the midst of their uncleanness', could easily have been understood by the author to refer to the whole, visible tent.

[67]Since the author cites Exodus in the first place to substantiate his claim that the earthly priests serve τὰ ἐπουράνια by way of a shadowy illustration and since the author uses this same language in 9:23-24 where the reference clearly includes the heavenly holy of holies, it seems beyond question that the whole tent is envisaged in 8:5. See also note 10.

[68]Hofius, *Vorhang* 65.

out the other side of these heavens.[69] These kinds of conclusions follow from a local reading of 9:11.

The second qualification which must be made to the local interpretation relates to the fact that the primary function of 9:11f is to contrast the whole heavenly tabernacle with the 'earthly sanctuary' of 9:1, as the μέν/δέ construction indicates. This means that it must be borne in mind that *the purpose of 9:11f is not to delineate the author's cosmology but to show the superiority of the whole of the heavenly cultus over the earthly.* This fact is most easily seen in the four parallel phrases which the author inserts between the subject of 9:11-12 (Christ) and the verb (entered in):

(a) διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς
(b) οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως
(b′) οὐδὲ δι' αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων,
(a′) διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος.[70]

These four measured phrases contrast the 'cultic spaces' and the 'mediums of approach' of the two covenants with each other.[71] Attridge has rightly pointed out that the use of the same preposition in the same context in two different senses is not unusual, so one cannot use the instrumental sense of the διά in the last two phrases to discount a local reading in the first.[72]

In the light of the contrast with 9:1, however, it must be borne in mind that the real point of passage through the tent here, if the meaning is indeed local, must be to contrast the tent through which Christ passed with the one in which the earthly priests and high priests performed their duties and through which they passed. Both the sacrifice which Christ offered (a′) and the structure in

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[69]*Vorhang* 67-68. He predictably does not take 7:26 as a statement of place but as 'eine Aussage über die unbeschreibliche Machtfülle, die Christus von Gott empfangen hat' (p. 69).

[70]Although Hofius is the original source of this manner of presentation, *Vorhang* 66, it's value is confirmed by its use by other scholars as well (e.g. Thompson, *Beginnings* 105; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 159; and Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 237).

[71]Phrases used by Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 237, although he sees the tent here as the outer compartment and the nether heavens.

[72]*Hebrews* 245, following Moffatt, *Hebrews* 121 and Hofius, *Vorhang* 67 n. 110. Attridge points out Rom. 2:28 (ἐν); 4:25 (διά); 11:28 (διά); Heb. 5:1 (ὑπέρ); 7:25 (εἰς); and 1 Pet. 2:20 (ἐν). Note Montefiore's incorrect comment in *Hebrews* 152: '[I]t would be bad style and unparalleled N.T. usage to use the same preposition twice in the same sentence with the same case but with different meanings'. Attridge also rightly notes that διά should not be taken with anything which preceeds it, such as ἀγαθῶν (as also J. C. K. von Hoffmann, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Die heilige Schrift des NT untersucht 5 [Nördlingen: Beck, 1873] 335, and A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913] 89) or Χριστός (Seeberg, *Hebräer* 100). The balance of the four phrases demonstrates conclusively that they all belong together to modify εἰσῆλθεν.

which he offered it (a) are superior to the sacrifices (b′) and structure (b) with which the earthly priests ministered.

The third qualification relates to the parallelism of 9:11 with 4:14 and is more of an observation. For many interpreters, this similarity is that which makes the local reading decisive. In the light of the preceding two qualifications, is the parallel as close as is generally thought? 4:14 exhorts the audience to hold fast to their confession since they have 'a high priest who has passed through the heavens'. This verse marks the very beginning of the main discussion of Christ's high priesthood,[73] and the author's comment is certainly related to the role of Christ as high priest.

The question remains, however, as to what aspect of Christ's high priestly 'passage' is in view. Commentators may indeed be correct to see 4:14 in relation to the outer tent of the heavenly tabernacle in the light of 7:26, where Christ has come to be 'higher' than (presumably) these heavens. The language, however, may have a slightly different nuance than this. Although 9:11 and especially 8:1[74] may indeed be similar to these verses, 6:19 and 10:20 may be even closer parallels. The sense of 4:14 seems closer to saying that Christ has passed 'through the veil' than that he passed through the outer tent. The heavens in these two verses are mentioned more as that which Christ has successfully penetrated than as a part of the greater and more perfect tent. While these references do not particularly denigrate these heavens, they do not seem to hold them in the same regard as the heavenly tent in 9:11.

The local reading, therefore, supports at least two plausible interpretative options for understanding the heavenly tabernacle, namely, one which envisages a 'vertical' heavenly structure consisting of lower heavens and the highest heaven and one which sees it as a 'horizontal' structure located somewhere in the heavens.[75] Since most scholars opt for one of these interpretations based on this reading of διά, the local sense should be taken seriously. After having made the preceding qualifications, however, one wonders whether the local reading actually takes better account of the context than the instrumental one.

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[73]W. Nauck, 'Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes', *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, ed., Walther Eltester (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960) 199-206, following Michel's division at 4:14, *Hebräer* 29-35, noted the similarity between 4:14-16 and 10:19-23 and claimed that this was an inclusio bracketing the middle theological section of the epistle. G. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, SNT 73 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) 110, 117, 120, has refined Nauck's observations through a text-linguistic analysis of the epistle as a whole, but he has confirmed that despite the rhetorical interruption of 5:11-6:20, 4:14 does (in one of its functions) serve as the introduction to the central theological argument of the epistle.

[74]So Hofius, *Vorhang* 68.

[75]A distinction made by Rissi, *Theologie* 39, in favour of the horizontal option.

The similarity to 4:14 and 7:26, for example, is not only lessened by the fact that the author is referring to the whole tent and making a point which is not primarily spatial, but these verses form a questionable parallel in the first place. In addition, we have already expressed strong doubts as to the appropriateness of the very existence of an outer sanctum in the heavenly tent due to the author's theology of access. These factors lead us to reconsider how an instrumental reading might fit into this context.

2. The instrumental reading

As we have indicated, the principal objection to the instrumental reading is the fact that it results in a sentence which, when taken as a whole, seems awkward. Christ, by means of the greater and more perfect tent, entered into the holy of holies. As we have already indicated, most of those who have chosen this interpretative option have felt compelled to take the tent metaphorically, resulting in readings which see this 'structure' as something symbolic, such as Christ's body.

While this difficulty must be acknowledged, the instrumental reading should not be casually passed off. If one suspends judgement on the sentence as a whole for a moment and looks at it only up to the point of the main verb, some significant observations can be made. In the first place, it could be argued that an instrumental reading of διά would suit the μέν/δέ contrast with the whole 'ἅγιον κοσμικόν' of 9:1ff better than the local reading. While the earthly sanctuary had certain ordinances which included ineffectual sacrifices, Christ performed his sacrifices *via* a greater and more perfect tent.[76] Such a reading would thus fit well with σκηνή as a reference to the entirety of the heavenly tabernacle.

The instrumental reading also might be thought to fit better into the parallelism of the four measured phrases of 9:11-12. While a shift from a local to an instrumental sense is not impossible, these four phrases form a smooth and coherent whole if they all be taken instrumentally. When read in this way, they straightforwardly contrast the 'tools' of atonement used in each covenant, first in terms of the two tabernacles and then in terms of the two kinds of sacrifices. It thus reads that when Christ arrived as high priest, he did his work via a greater and more perfect tent (not like the 'hand-made' tabernacle of this creation) and with his own, perfected blood (not like the ineffectual blood of goats and bulls). One would suppose that a first time reader or listener could

[76]The word *via* captures, in my opinion, the ambiguity of διά in 9:11 and also provides a reading in English which does not sound quite as redundant.

easily have had such an understanding at least until they arrived at the main verb.

As we have claimed, the main difficulty with this reading comes when one arrives at εἰσῆλθεν. It should be noted, though, that the awkwardness which results is not conclusive, particularly if the author is not primarily speaking of structures or cosmology. He is making an eschatological argument. Christ, via the greater and more perfect tent (as contrasted with the ἅγιον κοσμικόν), entered into the holy of holies. One statement highlights the contrast of the heavenly tabernacle with the earthly, completing the eschatological contrast between the two tents begun in 9:1, while the second highlights the superior redemption which Christ has effected by entrance into the heavenly holy of holies, a salvific emphasis. The first would continue the argument in terms of the imagery of the structure of the tabernacle which the author is using; the second in terms of the symbolism of the Day of Atonement which takes place within that structure.

As we have emphasised several times, the author's principal interest throughout the passage does not seem to be cosmology but what is now available to the listeners through the salvific actions of Christ. N. H. Young, for example, has rightly noted that what the διά expressions in 9:11-12 are really about is the superiority of the new order, of the new eschatological age.[77] Marie Isaacs has expressed the author's true concerns in general in terms of 'sacred space', that 'which the worshipper wishes to approach in order to gain access to the deity.'[78] It is possible, therefore, that the phrases 'greater and more perfect tent' and 'entrance into the holy of holies' are expressions with broader meanings than at first might be thought, ultimately with two slightly different referrents.

The tent language serves to contrast the structures of the earthly cultus in order to sustain the rhetoric of the discourse and is somewhat peripheral to the author's main concern. Day of Atonement imagery, on the other hand, stands at the heart of the contrast, having the important function of re-presenting the core of traditional Christian atonement language in terms of the high priestly metaphor. Taking διά instrumentally, therefore, may in the end actually provide a more likely reading for 9:11-12 than that which would result from the local interpretation.

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[77]'Gospel' 204.

[78]*Space* 61.

C. Hebrews 9:24

While the term σκηνή does not actually occur in 9:23-24, these verses tie together several themes relating to the tent in such a way as to shed light on the previous references to the tabernacle in chapters 8 and 9. The reference to ὑποδείγματα is reminiscent of 8:5 and Moses' instruction to make the tent like the type shown him on the mountain. The reference to ἅγια which are not χειροποίητα reminds one both of 8:2 and 9:11, while the statement that Christ entered 'into heaven itself' sounds much like the cosmological reading such as may have been present in 9:8. These two verses, therefore, have the potential of bringing together our examination of the heavenly tabernacle up to this point.

The *crux interpretum* of 9:24 is largely the meaning of the statement that Christ did not enter into a handmade holy of holies,[79] but *into heaven itself.* This statement has been taken in three basic ways:[80] as an identification of this holy of holies with heaven as a whole,[81] as an identification of it with the highest heaven,[82] or as a synecdoche in which the whole (heaven) is substituted for its part (the tabernacle in heaven).[83] These three readings of the verse roughly correspond to three general interpretations of the heavenly tabernacle; namely, the cosmological reading, the view which identifies the parts of the tent with a multilayered heaven, and the interpretation which believes there to be an actual tabernacle within heaven.[84] All three interpretations are theoretically possible. A fourth option, the Platonic reading, will also need to be considered in the discussion.

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[79]We have already argued above that ἅγια is a reference to the holy of holies, *contra* Rissi (see above, p. 143-44).

[80]It is difficult to know how to classify those who read these verses Platonically (e.g. Spicq, *Hébreux* 2.267; Attridge, *Hebrews* 263; Grässer, *Hebräer 7,1-10,18* 190-91. While they are in one sense worthy of being in a category of their own, on the level of the text they could perhaps be placed in the third category.

[81]Riggenbach, *Hebräer* 284-85; Gyllenburg, 'Christologie' 675; Käsemann, *Wandering* 223; Montefiore, *Hebrews* 160; Cody, *Heavenly Liturgy* 149; Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 106; Kuss, *Hebräer* 125-26; MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 187; Braun, *Hebräer* 282; Rissi, *Theologie* 39; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 174; Isaacs, *Space* 66 n. 1; Scholar, *Priests* 169-76.

[82]Michel, *Hebräer* 312, 323; Hofius, *Vorhang* 70-71; Nissalä, *Hohepriestermotiv* 203; Peterson, *Perfection* 143; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 248.

[83]C. K. Barrett (implied), 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954), 386; Wilson, *Hebrews* 166; Hurst, *Background* 28; Weiss, *Hebräer* 486.

[84]This is only a general correlation, since several interpreters do not fit into this pattern.

1. 'ὑποδείγματα'

We have already discussed the meaning of this term in chapter 3, concluding that it was not a term with Platonic meaning, although it could be found in the literature to mean a representation.[85] We considered the term 'illustration' even more suitable to the context of 8:5 and 9:23. If this term cannot be found in either Plato or Philo to have a strictly Platonic meaning, then the notion that the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews is an eternal form or archetype must be seriously questioned. While the language of Hebrews has a Platonic/Philonic 'feel' to it, there are several aspects of the epistle which militate against reading the tabernacle in this way.

The first is that which we have just mentioned: the language of Hebrews is reminiscent in some ways of Plato/Philo, but it is *only* reminiscent. At every point the author comes close and then turns away from the Platonic, almost as if he is consciously avoiding those implications. He uses ὑπόδειγμα instead of μίμημα or εἰκών, and when he does use εἰκών in 10:1, it almost seems to have the opposite meaning of what might be expected.[86] While he does use τύπος and ἀντίτυπος, he does not use the more obviously Platonic παράδειγμα or ἀρχέτυπος. While he does use σκιά, it is not clear that he utilises it any differently than it is used in Colossians 2:17.[87]

The second and even more damaging argument against a straightforward Platonic tabernacle is the fact that the author's concerns are primarily eschatological in nature. Hurst has rightly pointed out the virtual contradiction in C. K. Barrett's statement that, '[t]he heavenly tabernacle and its ministrations are from one point of view eternal archetypes, from another, they are eschatological events.'[88] While we support Barrett's pioneering attempt to combine the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' elements in Hebrews, it must be objected that unless 'archetype' is taken in a general sense, this statement is self-contradictory. *Events cannot take place in the realm of Platonic archetypes,* as we have already noted.[89]

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[85]E.g. in Aquila's translation of Ezek. 8:10 and Deut. 4:17, where ὑπόδειγμα is used instead of ὁμοίωμα and ὁμοίωσις. See chapter 3, p. 113-14.

[86]It is true that Philo can use εἰκών of something which is a pattern (*Leg. All.* 3.96) or ideal form (*Som* 1.79), but the reason for this is because of Philo's three level philosophy in which God himself is the archetype of archetypes, while the *logos* and forms relating thereto are the 'image' of him (cf. *Som.* 1.75).

[87]So Hurst, *Background* 17.

[88]*Background* 33f.

[89]See chapter 3, 115f. Realisation of this fact would seem to sound the death knell for studies such as W. E. Brooks, 'The Perpetuity of Christ's Sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *JBL* 89 (1970)

The 'illustrations' and 'shadows' in Hebrews point more to future events than to heavenly structures. 10:1 states that the Law contained a shadow *of good things to come*, focusing on the atonement provided by Christ rather than a heavenly building. 9:11 confirms this impression when it states that Christ arrived as a high priest of good things 'having come to pass'. These good things are the real atonement and perfection which Christ has provided, an 'eternal redemption' (9:12) involving the cleansing of the human conscience (9:14). The Law had a shadow of these good things in its tent and in the ministry which took place there, but these earthly illustrations were not a perfect 'image' of those things.[90] 8:5 speaks of the earthly priests serving the heavenly structures by a 'shadowy illustration', a dative of manner referring more to the way in which their *service* related to that of Christ (his one time offering) rather than to heavenly structures. Once one sees that the main focus of shadow and illustration language in 8:5 is the events which take place in the heavens rather than the heavenly tabernacle itself, the inadequacy of the Platonic model in elucidating the argument of Hebrews becomes more and more apparent.

In fact, all of the various ministries which are a part of the earthly cultus, all of the 'gifts and sacrifices' offered by the priests and high priest (5:1; 8:3-4), all of these find their heavenly correspondent in the once and for all offering of Christ in the heavenly holy of holies. This fact explains why the author amalgamates various Levitical rites together in his contrasts of the Levitical cultus with Christ.[91] All of these liturgical functions in the offering of gifts and sacrifices can be put up against the one offering of Christ. He has no service to perform in the outer part of the heavenly tabernacle;[92] all of the earthly cultus finds its heavenly counterpart in the entrance of Christ into the highest heaven. This point is extremely significant and should be borne in mind in the subsequent discussion.

The use of ὑποδείγματα in 9:23 is slightly different from the dative singular in 8:5. In chapter 8, the term contrasted the *manner* of ministry in the earthly tent with that of the Christ in the heavenly one. In 9:23, on the other hand, the

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205-14, which tried to relate the eternality of Christ's sacrifice to Platonism in the epistle. If Christ's sacrifice was eternal in this way, it could not have been an event.

[90]10:1 seems to be the only place where one might get a Philonic 'foothold', for one could argue that the 'things themselves' are in God, of which the events involving Christ are the 'images' and the Law a further 'shadow'. To go down this line, of course, would require a good deal of speculation.

[91]See chapter 2, pp. 69-70, 72-73.

[92]Unless some supposed passage through the lower heavens be thought to have some particular one time function. For those who see Christ's high priesthood beginning while he was on earth, his obedience might compared to some preliminary function in the 'outer tent' of the universe.

structures and furnishings as a whole are contrasted with the heavenly sanctuary. It seems likely here as well, however, that the author's interest goes deeper than a quasi-literal pitting of structures against structures. The implements both on earth and in heaven are, more than anything else, part of a symbolic world of cultic associations. This fact is clear from the author's enigmatic statement that it is necessary for heavenly 'things' to be cleansed, a datum required by the imagery of a holy of holies.[93] Clearly this statement would not fit within a Platonic or Philonic scheme.

We would contend that the indication that the heavenly 'things' need to be cleansed is related to the fact that the author, once again, is developing a metaphor. On the one hand, this metaphor refers to the cleansing of the conscience.[94] We have argued in the preceding chapter that the author connects the rational and spiritual with the heavenly realm. While the flesh was the only real object of cleansing in the earthly ritual, the heavenly ministry actually perfects the worshipper in terms of their consciences (9:10; 10:22). Indeed, Attridge explains the enigma of 9:23 by noting that 'the heavenly or ideal realities cleansed by Christ's sacrifice are none other than the consciences of the members of the new covenant'.[95] Where the tension comes into the language is in the fact that the author is referring to such 'events' through a high priestly metaphor involving a heavenly tabernacle which was 'inaugurated' by Christ's offering. As we foresaw might happen in chapter 1, a tension is created by the utilisation of a metaphor, in the interpretation of which, one must be careful not to read the imagery beyond the limits of its particular function in the discourse.[96]

It is becoming increasingly clear that the author is not interested in a precise structural correspondence between the earthly and heavenly tents. Rather, *he considers the heavenly 'holy of holies' to be a 'sacred space' which is symbolic of the cleansing of the sins of the people of God.* The heavenly tabernacle, while relating spatially and cosmologically in some way to a place in

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[93]Moffatt writes, 'the idea becomes almost fantastic' (*Hebrews* 132). Hurst's attempt to interpret καθαρίζω as a mere synonym for ἐγκαινίζω is unconvincing (*Background* 38-39).

[94]It should be acknowledged that almost all of the language throughout Hebrews is metaphorical (e.g. the 'cleansing' of conscience). When I speak of metaphor throughout this discussion, I am referring to those places where the author himself gives previous language new meanings in the development of new, *live* metaphors in the course of his argument.

[95]Attridge, *Hebrews* 261-262. So also Schierse, *Verheissung* 48; W. R. G. Loader *Sohn und Hohepriester: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Christologie des Hebräerbriefs*, WMANT 53 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1981) 169-70; and Isaacs, *Space* 212 n.2 (who has a good summary of the other options which have been taken).

[96]See chapter 1, 'Tensions resulting from the use of figurative language', pp. 30f.

the heavens (which also does not fit well with the Platonic/Philonic interpretation), has a broader referrent than a mere structure.

One becomes more and more convinced that the tabernacle in Hebrews is part of a metaphorical framework from within which the author can speak of Christ's atoning work in contrast to the cultus of Israel. The author does not think so much in terms of a heavenly structure as of an effective work of atonement done by Christ. The cultic language he uses, in other words, is derived from categories which would have been relevant to his recipients. If such is in fact the case, then we should not be too surprised if the author is a bit sketchy about the heavenly tabernacle, for it was not the point of his argumentation but rather the form the argument took.

2. 'τὰ ἐπουράνια'

This neuter plural adjective in 9:23 is almost universally taken as a substantive referring to 'heavenly things'.[97] This translation follows from references in the previous verses to several items of the earthly cultus, including the whole earthly tent and its furnishings (9:21). All of these things are certainly the ὑποδείγματα of whatever the heavenly 'items' might be. In the context of a scholarship which often saw this latter term Platonically, it is not difficult to see why most scholars have interpreted τὰ ἐπουράνια as a reference to the originals of the earthly 'copies'.

The translation 'heavenly things', however, should be carefully qualified by the fact that the function of all these earthly items was to shadow one event, Christ's entrance into the heavenly holy of holies. There are no other services which Christ seems to perform in the heavenly tabernacle *qua* tabernacle other than this once and for all offering.[98] This fact makes it possible that the author is referring specifically to the heavenly holy of holies, as he is clearly in 9:24,

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[97]E.g. Moffatt, *Hebrews* 131; Michel, Hebräer 286, 322; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2.237, 267; Käsemann, *Wandering* 57; Montefiore, *Hebrews* 135, 159; Sowers, *Hermeneutics* 106, 111; Bruce, 162, 217; Theissen, *Untersuchungen* 92, n. 11; Hofius, *Vorhang* 70; MacRae of 9:23, 'Heavenly Temple' 187; Braun, *Hebräer* 232, 280; Rissi, *Theologie* 36; Wilson (of 9:23)*Hebrews* 164-65; Attridge, *Hebrews* 216, 260f; Hurst, *Background* 38; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 162; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 229; Weiss, *Hebräer* 430, 474; Isaacs 212 n. 2; Ellingworth, *Hebrews* 476; and Grässer, *Hebräer 7,1-10,18* 77, 186. Cody, (*Heavenly Liturgy* 181-84) and McKelvey (*New Temple* 149) may be rare exceptions, although they do not make their translation explicit.

[98]D. M. Hay has plausibly suggested that the notion of Christ's intercession in heaven may have been taken over from earlier tradition, since it does not completely fit with the author's strong sense of the completion of Christ's high priestly work after his sacrifice, as symbolised by his session at God's right hand, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (New York: Abingdon, 1973) 149-50. In any case, Christ's intercession also takes place in the holy of holies.

or, if the author is using the heavenly tabernacle metaphorically, to the sacred space which in that metaphor relates to the holy of holies.

We have already established that the author uses (τὰ) ἅγια in general to refer to the holy of holies. Even this expression is a neuter plural substantive of the adjective ἅγιος, possibly indicating that the author uses the neuter plural in general of that which is associated with this sacred space in the heavenly realm, referred to metaphorically as the holy of holies. It is even possible that τὰ ἐπουράνια is a substantive form of τὰ ἐπουράνια ἅγια, although we will not press this possibility too far.

We have mentioned in the previous section that commentators have often puzzled over the fact that the author believes τὰ ἐπουράνια to need some sort of cleansing. We followed in general those interpreters who take this as at least an oblique reference to the cleansing of consciences, since this is the chief result of the event performed by Christ in the 'holy of holies'. If the author is in some way referring to the cleansing of consciences, on the one hand, and if he is utilising the idea of a heavenly tabernacle metaphorically, then an explanation is at hand for the tension in the language, as we have already said. The clearly figurative nature of some of the imagery implies that one should not necessarily expect these heavenly things to correspond too closely to the earthly, shadowy counterparts.

Given the faulty translation of ὑπόδειγμα as 'copy' throughout the majority of scholarship, an assumption has resulted that there must be some kind of one to one correlation between the 'copies' and the 'originals'. Hofius depicts these assumptions well when he writes, 'Gälte dem Verfasser das irdische Allerheiligste tatsächlich als Abbild des Himmels, so könnte er unter gar keinen Umständen die irdische Stiftshütte mit ihren Einrichtungen (V. 21 f.) als ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς beschreiben'.[99] Hofius assumes that whatever τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς might be, they are certainly 'Urbilder' of the earthly 'Abbilder' and therefore that there must be heavenly equivalents for each earthly furnishing.[100]

We have already shown, however, that this is not necessarily the case. In its most precise sense, ὑπόδειγμα is a representation or likeness, but it might also be as general in meaning as an example or illustration, as in Heb. 4:11. We have also argued that this term is used more to contrast the activities and ministries which take place in the earthly tabernacle than to contrast the precise architecture. The only real correspondent to the activity of the earthly priests is

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[99]*Vorhang* 70.

[100]This impression, of course, also results from the usual understanding of ὑποδείγματι in 8:5.

Christ's single offering. This word provides a questionable ground, therefore, on which to base any conception of the precise structure of the heavenly tent.[101] Even the consciences which are the objects of cleansing are purged singularly by Christ's entrance into the heavenly holy of holies. These are several reasons why the heavenly holy of holies, even if not present linguistically, would seem to be the only heavenly *structure* to which the author could refer in all these statements. The author may, however, be referring more to the sacred space which τὰ ἅγια signifies than to any specific structure.

At times it is clear that the author is referring explicitly to the holy of holies. 9:24, for example, states that 'Christ did not enter into χειροποίητα ἅγια, ἀντίτυπα [ἅγια] τῶν ἀληθινῶν [ἁγίων], but into heaven itself'. It is possible, therefore, that the author also had the holy of holies in mind when he used the neuter plural in the previous verse: 'it was necessary for the illustrations τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς [ἁγίων?] to be cleansed with these, but τὰ ἐπουράνια [ἅγια?] themselves with better sacrifices than these.' Again, our argument is upheld if it merely refer to that sacred space with which the author equates the inner sanctum.

Hebrews 8:1-5 provides us with a test case for seeing if τὰ ἐπουράνια can reasonably be seen as a reference either explicitly or implicitly to the heavenly holy of holies. The author begins chapter 8 by speaking of the session of Christ at the right hand of God's throne. This could only be located in the holy of holies, on the right hand of the heavenly counterpart to the ark and mercy seat, God's throne. As we have now repeatedly claimed, Christ's function as a λειτουργός, as in 8:2, can only refer to priestly activities in the heavenly holy of holies, whether his one time offering or ongoing intercession.

Our interpretation of 8:2 fits well into this context, in which we followed the normal usage for Hebrews and saw 'τῶν ἁγίων' as the holy of holies and 'τῆς σκηνῆς' as the whole tent.. This verse thus reads that Christ was 'a minister of the holy of holies and of the true tent, which the Lord pitched, not a human.' We also suggested that the phrase could still be taken as a hendiadys if the author referred to the heavenly tabernacle exclusively in terms of a holy of holies,[102] a possibility we thought not unlikely in view of the author's theology and seemingly negative attitude toward the outer part of the tabernacle. An even better suggestion, in the light of what we have now said, is that the author

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[101]While the πάντα in 8:5 seems to require that the *model* for the earthly tent have correspondents to both compartments of the sanctuary, this fact does not necessarily require that the *ministries* within those two tents correspond to that which takes place in the two compartments of the model. As we have shown, the author contrasts *all* of the events which take place in the earthly cultus with the one offering of Christ in the heavenly holy of holies.

[102]See above, p. 145

in this instance is thinking of the heavenly space which he can call either the 'holy of holies' or the 'true tent'. These both ultimately refer to one reality. The basic reference can thus far be maintained.

When one arrives at 8:5, therefore, one finds that the earthly priests serve this heavenly space in the manner of a shadowy illustration. The context of a comparison between earthly and heavenly cultus makes a reference to the heavenly tabernacle so likely that several interpreters actually translate 'τῶν ἐπουρανίων' in 8:5 as 'the heavenly sanctuary'.[103] Those interpreters who do not translate the phrase in this way would agree that the heavenly tabernacle is the principal thing in view, since the author substantiates his claim by reference to a paradigmatic sanctuary.

One might object, of course, to this interpretation in that the author substantiates his claim in 8:5 by a citation from Exodus 25:40. This verse implies that the τύπος which Moses follows included a model for the *entire* tent, as the word πάντα implies. Moses was to make *everything* according to the pattern shown him. Πάντα does not actually occur in our LXX of Exodus 25:40, although it is present in the parallel statement in 25:9. While its presence here could simply represent the LXX version the author was following,[104] it is quite possible it was included specifically to make the point that *everything* in the earthly tabernacle was constructed from a pattern, indicating that the earthly sanctuary had only a 'parabolic' and symbolic meaning from the beginning.

The preceding objections, however, do not necessarily give a death blow to our interpretation of τὰ ἐπουράνια if the author here makes a slight shift in his argument. If the author did have a basically cosmological understanding of the tabernacle's significance, then he would have understood this verse to be about the universe, with the outer sanctum corresponding to the earth and the holy of holies being heaven itself. The universe is thus a *paradigmatic* tabernacle, the τύπος which Moses followed in constructing the whole of the earthly tent. The author has thus substantiated the claim that the earthly high priests were serving the heavenly space in a shadowy way by using an appropriate proof text indicating a cosmological pattern for the earthly structure.

Of course the author's theology ultimately has no room for the outer sanctum of the created realm in the fulness of the new age. It is destined to be removed and the outer tent will lose its 'στάσις'. This outer tent, therefore, would never be considered to be part of the 'true' tent by the author and certainly not the

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[103]E.g. McKelvey, *New Temple* 205; MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 186; Peterson, *Perfection* 131; Wilson, *Hebrews* 134; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 154; and Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* 199.

[104]It is worth noting, for example, that Philo also quotes this verse with πάντα in *Leg. All.* 3.102.

'heavenly' tent, for this would be a contradiction in terms. The earthly priests serve the heavenly 'holy of holies' in the manner of illustration, because although Moses was following a pattern of the whole universe, that which they represent occured in its inner sanctum, heaven itself.

It could be argued, therefore, that the author is not presenting a strictly cosmological interpretation of the tabernacle. The reality to which he refers is a kind of sacred space which can be referenced by several metaphors, including not only the heavenly tabernacle and the holy of holies, but also the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. When the author refers to the heavenly sanctuary, a number of interchangeable references is possible because he does not really have a tabernacle in mind, but a heavenly realm and 'city'. This is the interpretation of the tabernacle imagery which we feel best accounts for the language.

3. 'αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν'

With this phrase, we reach the heart of 9:24 and the crux of the interpretation of this verse. We have already mentioned that it could be understood in one of three ways: (1) as a reference to heaven as a whole, the inner sanctum of the paradigmatic sanctuary, as in the cosmological interpretation; (2) as the highest of a multilayered heaven, with these heavens constituting a two part sanctuary; or (3) as a synecdoche, with 'the heaven' as a figurative way of referring to the sanctuary in the heaven.

Of these three readings, the one which views this phrase as a synecdoche seems the least likely, because of indications in the context that the author is saying something more than this figure of speech would indicate. There is, for example, the striking use of the singular here for heaven. Out of the ten occurrences of οὐρανός in the epistle, the author only uses the singular three times (9:24; 11:12; 12:26). The last reference is to the created heavens and occurs in an Old Testament citation. It thus cannot be taken to indicate the author's usual practice. 11:12 also speaks of the created, phenomenological heavens and is not relevant to the context of 9:24. Only in 9:24 does the author use the singular of οὐρανός in reference to the place to which Christ has ascended. Even the previous verse uses the plural expression ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς of the location of the heavenly sanctuary. The use of the singular in 9:24 seems to indicate some nuance which the author wants to highlight, a fact emphasised with the use of αὐτά. The author is making a contrast in which 'heaven itself' is unquestionably better than its alternative. To consider this phrase as a mere figurative equivalent to 'the sanctuary *in* the heavens' would seem to miss out on the author's point.

A more plausible interpretation is held by a number of interpreters, namely, that *the* heaven here is the highest heaven (or heavens). In Michel's scheme, Christ passed through the nether heavens (the outer tent) and has entered into the ἅγια, which is the highest heaven(s).[105] Hofius, taking a slightly different line, has noted a similar alternation from plural to singular in the *Testament of Levi*, where the plural of 2:6 becomes a singular in 5:1 when the angel opens the gates of the highest heaven.[106] He writes, '[i]n diesem Satz [TLevi 5:1] ist mit dem durch kein Attribut näher gekennzeichneten οὐρανός der oberste Himmel gemeint, der "Himmel der Himmel" (οὐρανός τῶν οὐρανῶν), wie er äthHen 1,3f.; 71,5 genannt wird.' Hofius concludes that Hebrews could also signify the highest heaven by its switch to the singular in the context of the inner heavenly sanctum. Such a reading is quite plausible and has precedent. It also can account for the intensive pronoun αὐτά, since in this scheme the highest heaven is the 'true' type which the handmade holy of holies represents. On the other hand, Hebrews lacks those distinct indicators of a progression through multiple heavens which *1 Enoch* and *TLevi* clearly have.

Finally, it is hard to deny that a more basic cosmological interpretation of the paradigmatic tabernacle fits extremely well with 9:24. In this interpretation, the holy of holies in the earthly tent is, *in its fundamental significance*, an illustration or representation of heaven, the place where God's throne and presence is, without any distinction between heavenly spheres. The inner sanctum of the earthly sanctuary, therefore, is quite consciously conceived of as a symbol of God's heaven.[107] Christ did not enter into the handmade inner sanctuary, which is after all only a symbolic representation of the true place of God's presence, heaven. Christ did not enter into this imitative structure. Rather, he entered into heaven itself, the true and genuine place of God's presence which these earthly buildings were meant to represent. The cosmological reading might work even if Hofius' idiom should prove to be correct, for the author might only conceive of there being one true heaven, with the lower heavens all being a part of the created realm.

It is interesting that many of those things which are generally believed to refer the whole tent throughout chapters 8 and 9 are said of the heavenly holy of holies in 9:24. 8:2 and 9:11, for example seem to consider the whole heavenly

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[105]*Hebräer* 312: 'Auf alle drei Arten von "Himmel" läßt sich sowohl der Singular (οὐρανός) als auch der Plural (οὐρανοί) anwenden (1:10; 8:1; 9:23f; 11:12).'

[106]*Vorhang* 70-71.

[107]The previous interpretation, where the holy of holies is the highest heaven, can actually be considered a variation of this cosmological reading, the main difference being the nature of the outer tent.

tent as 'οὐ χειροποίητος', a statement clearly made of the holy of holies in 9:24. While the paradigmatic tent of 8:5 is a τύπος of the earthly tent as a whole, the author specifically focuses on the earthly holy of holies as an 'ἀντίτυπος' of the heavenly one. Finally, I have argued that the ministry of the whole earthly tabernacle is a ὑπόδειγμα of the heavenly inner sanctum. *The fact that the author focuses all of his principal imagery into the heavenly holy of holies confirms our claim that it is the true locus of his interest.*

9:24, therefore, cannot be considered to eliminate decisively any of the three main hypotheses as to the nature of the heavenly tabernacle, although it favours an interpretation which sees either heaven as a whole or the highest heaven as the inner shrine of the paradigmatic tabernacle. The fact that these three models of the tabernacle can survive a close examination of all of the principal texts is significant. More than anything else, it may indicate that the precise nature of the heavenly tabernacle is not of primary importance for the author. It is the salvific act of Christ which is central, and the tabernacle language is the means by which the author attempts to persuade his readers of the efficacy of Christ's atoning work, presumably because the author thought such imagery persuasive to his audience.

D. καταπέτασμα in Hebrews

It would not be appropriate to finalise any conclusions about the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews without considering the use of veil imagery in Hebrews. The term occurs three times in the epistle (6:19; 9:3; 10:20) and may have connotations which are relevant to our study. Of these three occurrences, 9:3 contributes the least to our discussion, since it is simply a statement of the arrangement of the earthly tabernacle. Since it appears in the context of the division between the two part tent, however, even this verse alerts us to the fact that the veil functions as an indication of the inaccessibility of the holy of holies. The veil marks the boundary between the outer and inner tent and therefore could be parabolic of the boundary or transition between the old and new age.

Of more import is 6:19, where the connotations of the veil become more explicit. Here it is stated that we have Christ as an anchor of our soul, steadfast and secure and 'εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος'. The phrase 'inside the veil' comes from Leviticus 16,[108] and is a periphrastic way of referring to the holy of holies. While the statement is roughly equivalent to

[108]So Hofius, *Vorhang* 88 n. 230. We have already noted that the author seems to draw several times upon this chapter, particularly in 8:2; 13:11; and here.

saying that Christ, 'entered once and for all into the holy of holies', as in 9:11,[109] it also has additional implications. Primarily, it would seem to imply that this entrance is the surpassing of a barrier, the possibility of going where one has not previously been allowed to go. The clear inference is that by means of Christ, the people of God now have unhindered access to sacred space and to God's throne. There is no veil for those who are faithful to the end.

We have also noted that 6:19 seems similar to 4:14 and 7:26 where it is stated that Christ passed through the heavens and is now higher than the heavens. These verses seem to indicate that this passage is a positive achievement, the surpassing of a barrier or transition. We have already questioned whether such a barrier or transitional realm really would be appropriate to the superior tent of 9:11, which is 'not of this creation'. As we have asked of the outer compartment, one wonders what the function of a veil would be in the new age and the heavenly realm. The other possibility is that these heavens are, like a veil, the boundary between the earth and the heaven where God dwells; perhaps they are even the created heavens. This question, however, cannot be definitively decided one way or the other.

The final reference to the veil occurs in 10:20 and is another one of the more controverted verses in the epistle. 10:19-22 reads, 'brothers, since we have boldness to enter into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which he inaugurated for us *through the veil, that is his flesh*, ... let us approach [him] with a true heart ...'. The problem centres on how to understand the phrase, 'τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκός αὐτοῦ'. While the most obvious grammatical reading would take this phrase to be in apposition to 'καταπετάσματος',[110] the sentence might make better sense if it is taken with an implied διά or with the verb of the relative clause.[111] Scholarship is roughly equally divided on which interpretation is more likely.

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[109]Hofius, *Vorhang* 73.

[110]Moffatt, *Hebrews* 143; Michel, *Hebräer* 345; N. Dahl, 'A New and Living Way: The Approach to God According to Hebrews 10:19-25', *Int.* 5 (1951) 405; W. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951) 66-68; Käsemann, *Wandering* 225f; H. Koester, 'Outside' 310; U. Luck, 'Himmlisches und Irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief: Ein Beitrag zum Problem des "historischen Jesus" im Urchristentum', *NT* 6 (1963) 208-9; Bruce, *Hebrews* 247-49; W. G. Johnsson, 'Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews', diss. (Vanderbilt, 1973) 353-55; N. H. Young, 'τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ (Heb. X.20)', *NTS* 20 (1973) 103-4; Peterson, *Perfection* 120; Thompson, *Beginnings* 107; Braun, *Hebräer* 307; Wilson, *Hebrews* 188-90; Attridge, *Hebrews* 285-86; C. Koester, *Dwelling* 164-65; Isaacs, *Space* 57.

[111]Westcott, *Hebrews* 320-22; Spicq, *Hébreux* 2:316; Héring, *Hebrews* 91; Cody, *Heavenly Liturgy* 161 n. 29; Montefiore, *Hebrews* 173-74; J. Jeremias, 'Hebräer 10,20: τουτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ', *ZNW* 62 (1971) 131; Hofius, *Vorhang* 81-82; Nissalä, *Hohepriestermotiv* 250; MacRae, 'Heavenly Temple' 188; Rissi, *Theologie* 42-43; Hurst, *Background* 28-29; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* 273,

It will not be useful to go through the arguments for each interpretation in detail.[112] Suffice it to say that the grammatical and contextual evidence is so strong that if any sense can be made of the expression in reference to the veil, this reading should be chosen, unless one supposes the author to have had a mental lapse or this reading to be an interpolation.[113] Joachim Jeremias also made a good case for seeing a parallelism between verses 19 and 20, with the τουτ' ἔστιν phrase in parallel to ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ in 10:19.[114] It would seem likely, therefore, that in whatever sense the author wishes us to equate Jesus' flesh with the veil, the meaning is related to this flesh as a sacrificial means of access to God.

Attempts to interpret in what way Jesus' flesh might be considered a veil have ranged from Nils Dahl's attempt to see Jesus' flesh as that which, when taken away, provides access to the heavenly world,[115] to James Moffatt's often quoted reading of it as a 'daring, poetic touch'.[116] In either case, the meaning of the phrase must be similar to seeing Christ's flesh as the doorway to the heavenly Presence. What is more significant is the fact that the author, as Moffatt put it, 'allegorizes the veil'. W. G. Johnsson has rightly pointed out that this fact supplies 'unambiguous evidence of a "spiritualizing" intent on the part of the author',[117] as we have already seen in his creation of a parable out of the two parts of the tent. More than anything else, this pattern of thought indicates that tabernacle imagery does not stand on its own, but is symbolic of a larger paraenetic purpose on the author's part. *The author is not interested in the tabernacle as a structure, but as what it can represent in his argument.*

Weiss, *Hebräer* 520, 525-27; J. Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*, SNTSMS 75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992) 234; Ellingworth, *Hebrews* 519-21.

[112]A concise treatment can be found in Young's article, 'τουτ' ἔστιν', mentioned in n. 102.

[113]As suggested by C. Holsten, *Exegetische Untersuchung über Hebräer 10:20* (Bern, 1875) 6. While τουτ' ἔστιν could certainly introduce a genitive dependent on an implied διά, the unanimous witness of Hebrews is that the author *always* uses this expression appositionally (2:14; 7:5; 9:11; 11:16; 13:15) with the appositional noun in the same case as that to which it refers! One must therefore either accept the reading as appositional or suppose the author to have made a mistake.

[114]'Hebr 10,20'. See n. 103.

[115]'New and Living Way' 404-5.

[116]*Hebrews* 143.

[117]'The Cultus of Hebrews in Twentieth-Century Scholarship', *ExpTim* 89 (1977-78) 107.

E. Summary

It remains for us now to bring together the various exegetical options into a coherent summation of the nature and function of the tabernacle in the central chapters of Hebrews. In keeping with our general method, it will be important to state clearly the varying levels of certainty with which different options might be likely. Of principal importance will be to ascertain what commonalities exist between these possibilities, for these promise to indicate how the author is using the tabernacle language on a more general level.

On the whole, we have identified three possible interpretations of the tabernacle, each of which can take account of the exegetical data in chapters 8-10. This is an important observation. While one can distinguish between each of these choices and it is possible to argue for one above the others (as I shall do), a case can be made for each in the light of that which the author says. It can thus be argued that there are certain thrusts which these three have in common and which are the direct contributors to the author's argument. We will attempt to bring these commonalities to the fore in our conclusion to the chapter.

1. An independent structure

The first understanding of the tabernacle which can account for the relevant exegetical data in these chapters is that view which sees the tabernacle as a structure within the heavens rather than as one whose parts are constituted in some way by one of many heavens or the heaven as a whole. The chief advantage to this reading is that it takes tabernacle language so literally that it does not require the harmonisation of the tabernacle with cosmology or of various symbolic meanings with one another. It does not rely heavily upon the interpretation of any one passage in particular and thus is more even in its approach to the text as a whole. It remains to be seen, however, whether in following the language so literally, it actually misses significant aspects of the author's thought, even the very reasons for the author's use of this terminology in various places.

In terms of 8:1-5, this interpretation coheres with all of the exegetical options, such as whether σκηνή would refer to the whole tent or the outer court in 8:2 and whether the idiom from Leviticus 16 is used. This heavenly structure is quite straightforwardly the pattern for the earthly tent, and it does not matter whether one takes τῶν ἐπουρανίων as a reference to the heavenly sanctuary as a whole or to heavenly things in general. One presumably would not, however, take it as a reference to the inner sanctum of the heavenly tabernacle.

This observation leads us to our first hesitancy about this interpretation, namely, the fact that it does not further the author's argument in terms of what is really significant about the heavenly tabernacle, namely, the fact that Christ has penetrated the heavenly veil and provided access to God's presence to those who believe. As we have repeatedly emphasised, the author believes all of the earthly cultus to find its counterpart in the one time offering of Christ in the holy of holies. There is no need in the author's theology for an outer tent in heaven, at least not in terms of Christ or the perfected. This criticism does not strictly contradict such a view of the tabernacle, but it should be borne in mind throughout this discussion.

This interpretation is also not eliminated by the argument in 9:1-10, although it does not fit into the train of thought as well as the cosmological *interpretation.* Hofius' attempt to read the language as 'the first part of the tent' and 'the second part of the tent' would mitigate the strangeness a bit, but not completely.[118] We have also offered strong arguments against his interpretation. One can also follow Hurst and others in reading 'first tent' in 9:8 of the whole tabernacle, but we have shown that this does not fit the context as well as taking it of the outer compartment.[119] In short, if the author is formulating his argument with a free-standing structure in heaven in mind, his train of thought here might strike one as slightly arbitrary. Why, for example, does he use the two compartments of the tabernacle as a parable for the two ages and how does the contrast between flesh and conscience relate to this delineation? How does the 'standing' of the outer sanctum obscure the way into God's presence? The fact that the author speaks of a parable at all seems to demonstrate that the tabernacle is significant for the author, not in and of itself, but because of that which it represents.

This reading of the tabernacle also coheres with all interpretations of 9:11-12, whether σκηνή be taken as the whole tent or the outer compartment and whether the first διά be taken locally or instrumentally, although when taken locally it would not relate to 4:14, as is true of the second interpretation. It is, however, the least satisfactory reading of 9:23-24, where the author seems to contrast quite deliberately the earthly holy of holies with 'the heaven itself'. While this phrase could be a synecdoche for a holy of holies in the heavens, it seems more likely that the use of αὐτά specifically highlights the contrast between 'representation' and reality.[120] The earthly holy of holies represents

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[118]See above, pp. 146-47.

[119]See above, pp. 147-48.

[120]It should be noted that while we have used 'illustration' to translate ὑπόδειγμα, we do not in principal oppose 'representation' as a translation if it is realised that there may be a varying degree of

whatever this heaven might be. Christ did not enter into the imitation, but into the very reality which it symbolised and after which it was patterned. 9:24, therefore, argues against this interpretation more than any other passage in chapters 8-10.[121]

As we shall see in our discussion of οὐρανός in the epistle, however, a tabernacle within the highest heaven does not cohere very well with the author's image of the heavenly Jerusalem in 12:22. The author gives us every reason to think that the final entrance of the people of God into rest is in fact an access 'εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων' (10:19). Should one really suppose that the imagery of 12:22f sees the perfected in the heavenly Jerusalem within the holy of holies of the tabernacle therein? It seems much more likely that the heavenly city *as a whole* is that which relates to what the author elsewhere calls τὰ ἅγια. This observation, more than anything else, seems to eliminate this reading of the tabernacle.

2. A tabernacle of the heavenly spheres

The second interpretation is probably the one which claims the greater number of contemporary scholars and is also the one which relates the cosmology of the heavens most specifically to the structure of the heavenly tabernacle. As we have already discussed,[122] this reading of the tent sees the highest heaven, the heaven of the heavens, as the holy of holies, while the lower heavens constitute the outer compartment. In some ways, it combines the most advantageous features of the other two interpretations by linking a *two part* heavenly tent with *one specific heaven* as the inner sanctum. It is thus an attractive option.

As with the previous interpretation, a tabernacle consisting of various heavenly spheres is compatible with all interpretations of 8:1-5. That reading of 8:5 which takes τῶν ἐπουρανίων as a reference to the heavenly holy of holies would still be less compatible than in the third interpretation; nevertheless, the second reading can easily account for a two compartment pattern shown to Moses.

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correspondence. The whole earthly tent is an 'illustration' of the heavenly space, but the earthly holy of holies in particular is a 'representation' of the heavenly space deemed 'holy of holies'.

[121]Rissi, *Theologie* 39, ingeniously circumvents this difficulty by seeing the heavenly tabernacle as a horizontal structure constituting the highest heaven, thus combining the first approach with the second's interpretation of 9:24.

[122]See above, pp. 172-73.

9:11-12 also fit into this interpretation, particularly if the first διά is taken locally. We have expressed doubt, however, as to whether it would then relate to 4:14 and 7:26, as is usually assumed. It is this parallel which has in fact formed the major impetus for this interpretation. If it is a questionable connection, then the fundamental basis of this option is removed. While one might still posit certain nether heavens, the only arguments for this reading which would remain would be (1) the author's idiomatic placing of God's throne 'in the heavens' and (2) a supposed distinction between σκηνή and τὰ ἅγια, necessitating an outer tent. Although we would argue, therefore, that the evidence is slim for a tabernacle of this sort, it remains at least compatible with these verses.

With regard to 9:1-10, the same claims can be made of the second interpretation as were made of the first. Although one can understand each claim in the argument without contradiction, the train of thought correlates less well to the tabernacle image than in the cosmological reading. The multilayered heavens do perhaps fit the analogy in the sense that lower heavens are usually seen as places removed from God's presence, but one still wonders what the function of these nether heavens is in the new age, unless certain angels or powers are still prohibited access from God's presence. In the light of heavenly Jerusalem language in 12:22, where myriads of angels are present in assembly, this scenario somehow seems unlikely. Where are the multiple heavens in this imagery?

Finally, this interpretation coheres with the various interpretations of 9:23-24. As Hofius has shown,[123] there is precedence for understanding *the* heaven as a reference to the highest heaven, although these all occur in the context of an ascension through numbered heavens. This reading, as opposed to the preceding, also preserves the distinct contrast between the earthly antitypes and the heaven itself which they represent. If τὰ ἐπουράνια in 9:23 refer to the inner sanctum of the heavenly tent, the argument has less continuity with the preceding verses, but there is still no obvious contradiction.

A closer examination of this reading of the tabernacle, therefore, raises certain questions at crucial points. While it coheres generally with chapters 8-10, it has surprisingly little basis apart from the need to identify the outer part of the tent with something. Since the highest heaven may be equivalent to the heavenly holy of holies, then it seems logical to associate the outer part of the tabernacle with the lower heavens. This is largely supposition, however, and does not seem to relate to the author's real concerns, which are focused entirely

[123]See above, pp. 172-73.

on Christ's passage through the 'veil' and his entrance into what is at least symbolically represented by the holy of holies.

3. A cosmological tabernacle

A cosmological reading of the tent, if taken rigidly, is also not without its problems. As we have shown,[124] it is that view of the tabernacle which sees it as a representation of the universe as a whole, with the outer compartment representing the earth and the inner sanctum the heaven where God dwells. It is thus at least partially similar to the second interpretation, although it does not distinguish cosmologically between the various heavens. Its greatest advantage in terms of the text is the fact that it seems best to explain the train of thought in 9:1-10 and in 9:23-24. As we shall claim in the conclusion, it also seems to cohere best with other early Christian thought on the temple and with what we know of Hellenistic Christianity in the early church.

To begin with an examination of the text, the strengths of this position are, as we have just claimed, its ability to account for the train of thought in 9:1-10 and 23-24. The division of the tabernacle into two tents, with each representing a different age and thus a different realm in the universe, fits in well with a cosmological tabernacle. When the author states that the way into the holy of holies is not apparent while the outer tent stands, he makes a statement remarkably analogous to the removal of the created realm in God's final judgement. The definitive entrance into God's presence in heaven is not 'apparent' while the created realm of flesh exists. The author thus implicitly reinforces everything he states in the epistle about the foreignness of the created realm as the realm of the visible. The coming realm, the heavenly one, is unseen. The author intimates that those who believe will not truly and definitively enter into rest until they leave this realm for the heavenly city. While these are not the author's main points in 9:1-10, they fit nicely into the background of his argument.

In 9:23-24, the contrast between the 'representative' holy of holies and 'the heaven itself' is, as we have claimed, most naturally seen as a contrast between the likeness and the genuine reality. Christ did not enter into something which represented God's presence, but he went into the place where God himself resides, heaven. If τὰ ἐπουράνια is a substantive form of 'the heavenly holy of holies' or even if the author uses the neuter plural of the 'sacred space' which is the unshakeable heavenly realm in general, then this reading is the most plausible one. All of the ministrations of the earthly priests find their

[124]See above, page 149ff.

corresponding *true* equivalent in the once for all offering of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. When the author speaks of the earthly service and its furnishings being illustrations or representations of the heavenly sanctuary, he pits all of its services against the singular entrance of Christ into heaven. This is why he amalgamates the various rituals of the old covenant together in his comparison with Christ's inauguration of a new covenant. There is therefore no apparent need to see any outer compartment to the future and final sanctuary, unless it be to house the inferior angels.[125]

While the cosmological reading fits 9:1-10 and 23-24 very well, it is in some ways counterintuitive to the usual interpretations of 8:1-5 and 9:11-12. Such is the case in part because of the way these passages have been read for the whole of this century, particularly the way in which ὑπόδειγμα and σκιά have been interpreted. Although the Platonic reading has come into question for the last few decades, the sense of a one to one correspondence between the ὑποδείγματα and the heavenly tabernacle's structure has continued to be an assumption. If in fact the whole of the earthly cultus foreshadowed the one time action of Christ in the heavenly holy of holies, then it is not difficult to see τῶν ἐπουρανίων, if not as a direct reference to the heavenly holy of holies, at any rate as a reference to that 'sacred space' which the author speaks of as the inner sanctum.

It is here, however, that a rigidly cosmological reading seems to run into difficulty. If the first part of 8:5 refers only to the heavenly holy of holies, then why does the author substantiate his claim with a τύπος of the *entire* tabernacle? A cosmological reading must view this pattern as the whole of the universe, a paradigmatic tabernacle. The train of thought would seem to flow smoother if the earthly priests served a complete *two part* heavenly tent by a shadowy illustration, for then one would expect a substantiation mentioning a complete model.

This is not to say, however, that one cannot make sense of the train of thought in a cosmological interpretation. The author uses the Exodus 25 verse because it is an obvious text for any interpretation of the earthly temple or tabernacle which seeks to establish a heavenly exemplar.[126] In this reading,

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[125]It is interesting that Philo sees the angels as priests in the cosmological temple (*Spec. Leg.* 1.66), as opposed to the temple 'made by hands' (χειρόκμητον). One might speculate that the angels' ministry in the created realm (cf. chapter 2, pp. 56ff.) is a kind of parallel to service in the outer tent. We have argued, however, that the angels no longer function in this role in the new age. Christ performs all the truly salvific functions in the greater tent of Hebrews.

[126]The idea that there is a heavenly model of some sort for the earthly temple and tabernacle was a widespread view throughout ancient Judaism and Exodus 25 is one of the earliest examples of this tradition. For treatments of a heavenly exemplar of the temple, see McKelvey, *New Temple*, 25-41. For a similar discussion of the tabernacle, see C. Koester, *Dwelling* 1-73.

then, the earthly priests serve the heavenly holy of holies by way of representation in their services, which can be demonstrated by the fact that Moses was merely following a pattern of the universe when he build the tent. In this pattern, the God of heaven which the priests serve dwells in the holy of holies. The cosmological interpretation can survive, therefore, if one distinguishes between Christ's singular *ministry* in the heavenly holy of holies, which the earthly cultus as a whole represents, and the *structural model* of the universe which gives rise to this parallelism. It must be admitted, however, that an interpretation which sees a two part heavenly tabernacle represented by a two part earthly service provides a more straightforward reading of these verses.

The other difficulties come in 9:11-12. These problems do not consist in whether διά is local or instrumental; for, as Hofius has pointed out, passage through the tent might not necessarily imply that Christ came out the other side.[127] Rather, the problems consist (1) in how one is to understand the phrase 'not of this creation' and (2) in the fact that the resulting identification of the tent with the holy of holies makes the sentence seem redundant.

The fact that the 'greater and more perfect tent' is 'not of this creation' has naturally led some interpreters to dismiss the cosmological reading.[128] How can a tent whose outer compartment is the creation be 'not of this creation'! The same therefore would seem to apply to seemingly synonymous statements regarding the 'true tent' (8:2). In order to maintain a cosmological interpretation, one must distinguish between the paradigmatic tabernacle as a whole, which is the universe (e.g. 8:5) and its holy of holies, heaven, which is the true tabernacle not of this creation (8:2; 9:11, 23-24). One must suggest that since the author considers the created realm to be temporary and destined for removal, he does not ultimately consider it to be a part of the 'true' tabernacle. The complexity of this solution, however, casts doubt on a thoroughgoing cosmological interpretation.

The second problem with 9:11 is that if there is only one compartment to the 'greater and more perfect tent', then this verse comes to have the redundant sense that Christ entered the holy of holies, by means of the holy of holies. If the διά be taken locally, it might make slightly more sense, for then it could be taken as a passage through heaven towards God's presence. In either case, the cosmological reading must expand the meaning of the words beyond what seems

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[127]*Vorhang* 65, 67-68.

[128]E.g. Attridge, *Hebrews* 222-23: 'While the "tent not made with hands" (9:11) and "pitched by God" (8:2) might be the cosmos, the description of the "true tent" as being "not of this creation" (9:11) makes it highly unlikely that the true tabernacle is the cosmos.'

to be their straightforward sense, making one suspicious whether this is the best interpretation.

To maintain a cosmological interpretation, one must affirm that the tabernacle imagery is, in the end, a kind of 'parable', as in 9:9. As we have seen in the last few paragraphs, a cosmological interpretation necessitates that language concerning the paradigmatic tent be seen as symbolic. One must suppose that the tabernacle language is really only a means to a paraenetic end and that the imagery always refers beyond itself to a symbolic world. We have already argued, for example, that the first mention of 'the greater and more perfect tent' is used to contrast the true 'structure' of the new age with the symbolic tent of the old. The second incidence, on the other hand, is salvific in focus, and alludes to the Day of Atonement ritual. If one remains on the surface of the text, the verse seems redundant because it speaks of entering into a place via that place itself. If one looks beyond the surface language to what the author is saying, however, the sentence is no longer redundant. Christ, by means of a realm which is in fact the reality symbolised by the earthly cultus, achieved true atonement by ascending and being seated at the right hand of God. This is the import of the sentence, although it is expressed in the imagery which the author has been using in order to convince his audience.

The cosmological reading, therefore, can account for all the relevant exegetical data, although at times it requires a reading which seems counterintuitive or redundant. This fact may indicate that it is either an inadequate or incomplete model for understanding the tabernacle in Hebrews. There are significant questions which it raises, however, which will be kept in mind in the conclusion of the chapter. These questions include fundamental issues such as whether the author actually has a specific heavenly structure in mind at all or whether he is using the imagery of the heavenly tent as a symbolic language appropriate for furthering his exhortation. Is there any function for an outer compartment in the heavenly tent? We will attempt to come to some firmer conclusions after we have briefly examined what the cosmology of the heavens might be in Hebrews.

IV. *Οἱ Οὐρανοί*

Before we can attempt to finalise any conclusions on the nature of the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews, we must briefly examine the way in which the epistle refers to the heavens in cosmological terms. Although the first and third interpretation of the tent do not require a specific heavenly cosmology, the second option is quite specific in the kind of cosmology which it requires. A

brief analysis of οὐρανός in the epistle, therefore, will provide further information which may be of use in evaluating at least the second interpretation of the tabernacle.

We have already had occasion to mention the use of οὐρανός in Hebrews in our discussion of 9:24. We alluded there to the fact that the epistle uses the term seven times in the plural (1:10; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:23; 12:23, 25), while using it only three times in the singular (9:24; 11:12; 12:26). Among these references, there is a variety of imagery which the author uses. Three of them, for example, refer in some way to the heaven (11:12; 12:26) or heavens (1:10) of the created realm. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these heavens will be removed in God's judgement. They are thus to be distinguished from the heaven of God's presence, which is not of this creation (9:24).

While Christ enters into the (singular) heaven itself (9:24), he is seated at the right hand of God's throne ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (8:1) and those things (or the holy of holies) which the earthly cultus represents are also 'in the heavens' (9:23), from which God speaks (12:25). The author can therefore refer to the heavenly holy of holies as being 'the heaven itself' or as being located 'in the heavens'. He can also speak of it as being located 'above the heavens' (7:26), a statement which seems parallel to Christ's passage 'through the heavens' as he enters the inner sanctum.

The exact nature of these various 'heavens' through which Christ passes, in which he sits, or above which he has risen is not exactly clear. Despite the variety of images used, the picture is not necessarily inconsistent. The author clearly distinguishes at several points, for example, between the heaven(s) which is a part of the creation and that one(s) which is unshakeable. In the remainder of references, it is not clear whether there is a third category or whether the author simply does not consistently distinguish between the created and indestructible heavens.

We have already had occasion to mention Michel's three sphere interpretation in which there are three kinds of heaven: those which are created, those which constitute the outer heavenly tent, and that of the heavenly holy of holies.[129] He writes of Christ's passage 'through the heavens' in 4:14: 'οἱ οὐρανοί ist hier nicht einfach der Himmel als Sitz Gottes, auch nicht nur eine Wiedergabe des hebräischen Ausdrucks שמים, sondern die verschiedene Schichtung überirdischer Sphären, die zwischen Gott und Mensch, Heiligtum und Erde gelagert sind.'[130]

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[129]See above, p. 156.

[130]*Hebräer* 204-5. For a similar interpretation, see Cody, *Heavenly Liturgy* 77ff; Andriessen, 'Zeit' 83f; Peterson, *Perfection* 76; and for a distinction between types of heaven, Löhr, *Thronversammlung* 188.

As we have already seen in Michel's treatment of 9:11, such a distinction provides a potential explanation for verses like 4:14 and 7:26. Christ passes '*through* the heavens,' and thus comes to be '*higher* than the heavens.' Both of these allusive comments could easily be explained by a cosmology which envisages several layers of heaven, with the unshakeable heaven(s) at the top. Since for Michel these lower heavens must be 'not of this creation', he classifies them as a third kind of heaven, neither being a part of the created heavens nor being the heaven itself where God dwells.

The notion of a multilayered heaven would not of course be unique to Hebrews in the literature of the period. As early as the Maccabean period, the *Testament of Levi* spoke of three heavens, with the uppermost as the place where the 'Great Glory' dwelt in a heavenly holy of holies.[131] Paul similarly speaks of a third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2, demonstrating that the tradition was known within early Christianity. Other documents of the period speak of seven or more heavens.[132] Clearly Hebrews would not be unique if it viewed the cosmos as consisting of 'verschiedene Schichtung der überirdischer Sphären' between God and the earth.

We have argued against a relationship between 4:14, 7:26 and 9:11, however, so Michel's interpretation can only be inferred from a supposed outer tent and the use of the plural for heaven in verses like 8:1; 9:23; and 12:25.[133] In the end, it does not seem possible on the basis of the use of οὐρανός alone to determine whether there are two or three kinds of heaven in Hebrews. This decision will depend on one's reading of the tabernacle. Because of the author's general use of the plural, however, it does seem likely that he envisaged a multilayered heaven of some sort.[134]

The final instance of the term *heaven* in Hebrews will launch us into our conclusion to this chapter and the heavenly tent. This occurrence of the term appears in 12:23, where it is stated that the audience of the epistle have come to

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[131]*TLevi* 2:7-9; 3:1-4. Although the text was later edited to include seven heavens, the original number seems to have been three (So H. C. Kee in his introduction in *The Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, 788-9. For a discussion of the date, see the same, page 777-78).

[132]E.g. 2 *Enoch* 3-20 (7 heavens, although there are 10 in 22J); *Apoc. Mos.* 35:2 (7); *Apoc. Abr.* 19; *Asc. Isa.* 7-11 (7); *b. Hag* 12b (7); *Pesiq. R.* 5 (7); *Midr. Ps.* 92.2 (7); *Abot R. Nat.* 37 (7); *Pirqe R. El.* 154b (7); *Num. Rab.* 14 (10); *Apoc. Paul* 11, 29 (7); 1 *Apoc. Jas.* 26:2-19 (72); 3 *Enoch* 48:1 (955!). For a discussion of the various concepts of heaven in this regard, see A. T. Lincoln, '"Paul the Visionary": The Setting and Significance of the Rapture to Paradise in II Corinthians XII.1-10', *NTS* 25 (1979) 211-14.

[133]See above, p. 161-62.

[134]On the other hand, this pattern may simply be an idiomatic expression which he used thoughtlessly without consideration of a precise cosmology.

the assembly of the first born who are enrolled 'in [the] heavens' (12:23). As we have argued in chapter 4,[135] this statement is proleptic since it implies the certainty of the believers' entrance into their future, final rest in the heavenly city as spirits finally perfected. This assembly takes place in the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

As we have already argued, this image seems implicitly to connect the heavenly Jerusalem with τὰ ἅγια to which those who believe have access. Since these ἅγια are 'the heaven itself', one immediately conjectures that, for the author, the heavenly Jerusalem is in fact the heavenly holy of holies which is the heaven itself. This picture is not like that implied by *4 Ezra* 10 or *2 Baruch* 4, where it can be assumed that the temple is there within the heavenly city or paradise.[136] Rather, Hebrews seems similar to Revelation 21:22, where there is no need for a temple in the heavenly city, 'for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.' This similarity opens up a line of inquiry which we must now bring into consideration as we conclude the chapter.

V. *Conclusions*

This chapter has covered a great variety of issues surrounding the nature of heaven and the heavenly tabernacle in the epistle to the Hebrews. In the end, we suggested that the central section of the epistle allows for three possible interpretations of the heavenly tabernacle. We did not include a Platonic reading of the tabernacle within these possibilities because of the fact that the author actually does not use the most important terms, while using terms which are reminiscent of Plato/Philonism differently from Plato/Philo themselves. A second reason was the fact that events cannot take place in a realm of archetypal patterns. While one could distinguish between the tent in which salvific events take place and the forms in the mind of God, this is not a distinction which Hebrews ever makes. If the author intended his imagery to be Platonic or Philonic, then he was either too ignorant or too sophisticated to be understood apart from speculation.[137]

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[135]See chapter 4, p. 133.

[136]Hurst, *Background* 41, notes McKelvey's comment, *New Temple* 29, that 'how could a Jew think of a descent of the heavenly Mount Zion without having in mind a descent of the heavenly temple?'. This comment certainly applies to *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, but the question could equally be asked, 'how could a *Christian* imagine a heavenly Jerusalem which did not have unimpeded access to the divine presence and to the Lamb?' There is also absolutely no evidence in Hebrews that the author expected any descent of this city. The heavens and earth were not to be renewed but removed.

[137]It would also seem impossible to gauge whether the author was consciously avoiding Platonic language because his audience might find it objectionable. While this is possible, it is speculative.

We can probably also eliminate that view of the tabernacle which sees it as a free standing, two part tent in the heavens or even constituting the uppermost heaven. We have argued that 9:24 is a strong argument against this position because of the contrast between the earthly, handmade holy of holies and 'the heaven itself'. We argued that the αὐτά here indicated the difference between the symbol and the reality which it represented. Along with the striking singular of οὐρανός, it seemed reasonable to see this statement as a virtual equating of this heaven with the holy of holies of the paradigmatic tent, whether it should refer only to the highest heaven or to the unshakeable heavens as a whole.

A second blow to this reading of the tabernacle comes in 12:22, where it is implied that the rest of God for which believers are destined is in fact the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, *Zion*. This verse seems to imply that τὰ ἅγια into which the believers will have final access is indeed the heavenly Jerusalem itself. We noted that this picture seemed quite similar to Revelation 21:22, where the heavenly city did not have a temple, because God and the Lamb served in this capacity. This imagery in chapter 12 does not include a tabernacle and seems to provide reason to believe that the earlier language was more paraenetic than literal.

A strong case can be made that the tabernacle is more of an illustration and a rhetorical device than an actual entity in the heavens. The author clearly uses it in 9:8-9 as a parable to demonstrate the superiority of the new age and its covenant. To do so, he trivialises, perhaps even nullifies the outer tent as symbolic of an age which is about to pass away like the created realm. For this reason, we have repeatedly questioned what function an outer compartment might have in a heavenly tabernacle where access to God was assured. Even the angels are present in God's presence in the heavenly assembly of 12:22. We have also argued that all of the rituals, gifts, sacrifices, and ministries of the earthly cultus and its priests are contrasted as a whole with the singular ministry of Christ in the heavenly inner sanctum. We repeatedly questioned what function there could be for Christ in an outer compartment of a heavenly sanctuary. While one might question our claim that ὑπόδειγμα language is contrasted directly with the heavenly holy of holies, the author's amalgamation of the Levitical rituals in contrast to Christ's singular offering is enough to establish our point.

There are other indications that the author is using the tent rhetorically and metaphorically. He uses the veil in 10:20, for example, as a metaphor for the flesh of Christ. While this language is difficult if pressed, it seems at the very least to see Christ's flesh as the doorway into God's presence. 6:19 also seems to use the earthly veil as a symbol for the supercession of the barrier to God's presence more than as any real entity, which we considered to be parallel to

4:14 and 7:26 where the heavens seem like a kind of veil through which Christ passes. 9:23 speaks of τὰ ἐπουράνια in reference to the heavenly sanctuary, but seems to use it as a symbol of the realm of the conscience. Finally, there is the possibility that the author's statement in 9:11 approaches redundancy because the author is using both the tent and entrance thereto metaphorically.

The tabernacle, therefore, serves to confirm our earlier thesis that all of the language of Christ as high priest and of a heavenly tabernacle is principally an extended metaphor used because of the particular paraenetic purpose of the author. In the author's own theology, these were used to refer to the sacrificial death, ascension, and session of Christ at the right hand of God. There have been two fairly recent analyses of the structure of Hebrews which have relied heavily upon ancient rhetoric in their study, both of which have concluded that 1:5-2:18 form a *narratio* presenting a basic overview of the author's argument.[138] Walter Übelacker, one of these two, has also suggested that 2:17-18 constitute a *propositio* within this framework. These two studies have much to commend them, and they promise to provide substantiation for our thesis.

The high priest motif does not appear until 2:17, where it appears suddenly in the author's argument. While chapters 1-2 of Hebrews are in some ways unique in the New Testament, they nevertheless present a Christology and soteriology in what is arguably straightforward early Christian theology as conceived by the author. The implicit connection of Ps. 110:1 with Ps. 8, for example, which is used to present the exaltation and session of Christ after his atoning death is a standard early Christian theme.

With the author's main proposition in 2:17-18, however, he announces the metaphor he is going to use to argue for the relevance and superiority of these salvific events to his audience, namely, he is going to claim that 'die Erhöhung und Inthronisation dem Eingang in das Heiligtum entspricht.'[139] *The whole high priest motif, therefore, is an extended metaphor which compares the salvific actions of Christ to the old covenant.*

Within this metaphor, it is necessary for this great high priest to have a sanctuary in which to offer his atoning sacrifice. The epistle gives every indication that the author was a Hellenist of the variety which would not have a great reverence for the Jerusalem temple of the first century C.E. As we said as

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[138]I refer to the studies of Nissalä, *Hohepriestermotiv* v, 35, and W. G. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu* exordium, narratio, *und* postscriptum *(Hebr 1-2 und 13,22-25)*, CBNTS 21 (Lund: Almquist & Wiksell, 1989) 185f. Rhetorical approaches themselves, of course, go back at least as far as H. F. von Soden, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte: die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1905) 127-28 (so G. Guthrie, *Structure* 8).

[139]Luck, *Geschehen* 206-7. Luck has noted that 7:26 and 9:24 implicitly connect the exaltation of Christ with his entrance into the heavenly holy of holies (n. 1, p. 207).

we began this chapter, the author's theology includes a dualism between the earthly realm of flesh and the heavenly realm of spirit. He believes in the ultimate destruction of the created realm. His use of Psalm 40 in 10:5-7 and various hints he gives throughout his argument[140] seem to indicate that the author comes from that branch of early Christianity which is represented in Acts 7 by the speech of Stephen.

William Manson argued as early as 1949 that the author of Hebrews might stand within such a tradition.[141] While we do not want to advance any specific connection between the two, we note both the mention of a heavenly τύπος and Stephen's attitude toward the temple when he quotes Isaiah 66:1.[142] This Old Testament citation, while not mentioned by the author to the Hebrews, sums up well his metaphorical use of the tabernacle in such a way as to have cosmological overtones:

> The heaven is my throne,
> and the earth is a footstool for my feet.
> What kind of house will you build for me,
> or what place for my rest?
> For my hand made all these things.

In our opinion, such a model is the best explanation for the author's use of the tabernacle imagery throughout the epistle. A reference to ἡ σκηνή, τὰ ἅγια, or even τὰ ἐπουράνια is equally a reference to the heavenly realm, the 'sacred space' to which Christ has ascended. An alternate metaphor for exactly the same place is the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly city, or, in a slightly different vein, the rest of God. These are 'poetic' statements, so one should not expect there to have been a rigid correspondence between representation and reality. The author did not have structures in mind when he used these images.

In 8:2, therefore, the statement that Christ is a minister of the holy of holies and of the true tent is a restatement in metaphorical terms of what has just been said in 8:1: Christ has been seated at the right hand of God in the heavens. 'Holy of holies' and 'true tent' are two equal expressions for the sacred space into which Christ has entered. In 8:5, the earthly priests serve this heavenly space or heavenly sanctuary, if you would, by way of a shadowy illustration. The proof of this claim is the fact that Moses was only following a pattern which

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[140]Such as his use of ταύρος in 9:13, a term which is never used in a sacrificial context in the Pentateuch, but is used in several anti-sacrificial contexts of the Old Testament, such as Ps. 50:13 (49:14 LXX) and Is. 1:11 (The author alludes to the former in 13:15). See chapter 2, n. 63.

[141]*Hebrews passim.*

[142]Cf. also *Sib. Or.* 1.135-140.

was shown him. The author may have thought of the whole universe at this point. While the cosmological model is difficult to maintain if one supposes this to be the author's only focus, the image works if he primarily has a sacred space in view which he can relate to a broader conception of a cosmological tabernacle which he also has.

In 9:1-10, the cosmological overtones of the author's metaphor come close to the surface of the argument. What need would there be for an outer part of the heavenly sanctuary? The earthly outer sanctum was only symbolic of the old covenant and old age, the fleshly. As long as the created realm and the world of flesh continue to exist, the true home of the believer is invisible. The 'tabernacle' through which Christ offered his sacrifice (9:11), however, a 'greater and more perfect tent' (let the reader understand), is far superior to this earthly structure which was merely an indicator of it. It is not of this creation, this heaven to which Christ has ascended. Christ 'entered' into this 'holy of holies' having brought about eternal redemption.

All of the ministries, furnishings, and structures of the old covenant were just illustrations of the heavenly realm, the true sanctuary, if you would (9:23). Christ entered into this true 'holy of holies', this antitype of that which the earthly, handmade holy of holies represented. Christ entered into the heaven where God and the heavenly city are (9:24). He passed through the heavens (4:14), inside the veil (6:19), and is now higher than the heavens (7:26). His flesh is therefore the entrance into this 'holy of holies' (10:20) for those who have the boldness to enter (10:19).

A reading which considers the tabernacle imagery as part of a general high priestly metaphor, therefore, can account for all the relevant exegetical data of the epistle best. The author has taken traditional aspects of early Christian soteriology and Christology, the atoning death, ascension, and session of Christ, and has used them to depict the entrance of a Melchizedekian high priest's entrance into a heavenly holy of holies. The best explanation for the author's motivation for doing so is the relevancy of such imagery for his recipients.[143] If the author thought that such an argument would be relevant to his audience, then an explanation for the metaphor is at hand. Such a situation could also explain why the author pursues the imagery so extensively without extensively 'decoding' it for his readers, thus leading to moments where the sense of the argument may seem redundant or sketchy.

George MacRae's suggestion, therefore, that the audience of Hebrews had an apocalyptic view of the tabernacle, while the author had a Platonic and

[143]There are several possible targets at which the author could be aiming, ranging from a community involved in Merkabah mysticism (thus the relevance of chapter 1) to one struggling with the recent destruction of the Jerusalem temple. It is not our professed aim, however, to pursue this question.

cosmological understanding of it may actually come close to the actual situation if one makes the distinction a bit more subtle.[144] The recipients of Hebrews may have an apocalyptic conception of the tabernacle, although it is impossible to know. They certainly know of the earthly cultus, however, and it is significant for them in some way theologically. The author himself may not be particularly interested in a heavenly tabernacle *per se*, but he certainly does not believe any earthly structure to have any abiding significance. He does possibly believe that the pattern which was shown to Moses was the universe. What he then does is to treat the heavenly realm, this sacred space, as a true tent, a heavenly holy of holies, through the eyes of his high priestly metaphor. Throughout his argument, he has the sacred space in view, occasionally turning to the cosmological model in the course of his argument. Through this metaphor, he hopes to convince his readers of the superiority of Christ's atoning work over any earthly sanctuary or cultus.

[144] 'Heavenly Temple'.

CONCLUSION I
The Narrative World of Hebrews

I. *Introduction*

The preceding four chapters have examined the discourse of Hebrews in an attempt to elicit the various aspects of Hebrews' thought world. It was argued in the opening chapter that this world about which the author was concerned and from which he presented arguments was in fact the story world of salvation history. His arguments are his interpretations of this story in the light of the situation of those to whom he has sent his homily, and in fact he and his audience are themselves characters within the grand plot. The author would have his hearers know that the plot has already reached its consummation and will soon see its final conclusion.

In an effort to reconstruct this story, we discussed two broad aspects of the epistle, namely, its temporal and its spatial aspect. We discussed the former under the heading of eschatology, for the plot of salvation history is orientated around the direction in which it has been heading and the point which it has in fact reached: the sacrifice of Christ. All of the previous story pointed to this occurrence and finds its true meaning therein.

As a part of the first half of the study, we noted the discontinuities and contrasts between before and after this point of climax under the heading of the new covenant (chapter 2). We argued that the author divided the story into two broad 'acts' corresponding to two covenants and that the turning point of the drama lay at the inauguration of the new covenant. Throughout the plot, however, the story was always moving toward God's intended destiny for humanity, namely, a glory and honour appropriate to those who are the sons of God. Chapter 3 explored this continuity in terms of God's promise to his people and the typology he himself laid down when he instituted the earthly cultus through the angels.

Chapters 4 and 5 then discussed the settings of the plot, its spatial dimension, and the way in which the created realm and true heaven functioned within the author's discourse. The earthly realm showed itself to be thoroughly temporary and destined for ultimate destruction along with the end of the first age. It was argued that the heavenly tabernacle was largely used metaphorically for that 'sacred space' where God dwells, although the author does seem to draw occasionally from a cosmological understanding of the tabernacle which sees the whole universe as the paradigmatic tent. We suggested that the author used this

kind of language because he thought it would be persuasive to his audience. These two settings, therefore, correspond to the two overlapping ages. As long as the created realm stands, the old age has not fully reached its conclusion. Access to the heavenly realm, on the other hand, corresponds to the beginning of the new age and will be available to the perfected forever.

In the process of elucidating the plot in the above studies, we have pursued the thesis that the whole motif of high priesthood, the picture of Christ as a high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice in a heavenly sanctuary, is a metaphor which grew out of a re-presentation of the traditional 'story' in cultic terms because of a perceived need. In chapter 3, our study also clarified the nature of perfection in Hebrews as the attainment of one's appropriate status in the purposes of God. In our opinion, these two findings are the most significant contributions which this study makes to Hebrews scholarship, although it is hoped that our final conclusions on background will eventually lead to equally profitable results.

In order to bring the major part of this study to a close, it is necessary to bring together the insights gained through our holistic examination of the epistle into a systematic picture of Hebrews' narrative world. In accordance with the guidelines we laid down for our study, we have 1) conducted a text-orientated study 2) which took into account the whole of the epistle 4) and was sensitive to possible differences between the author and his audience. Only the systematisation of the preceding findings into a coherent thought world (3) has not been fully achieved. The following pages, therefore, will attempt to complete the study by recapitulating our findings in a broadly episodic form. Once we have brought together this holistic picture of Hebrews, we will be able to suggest some general conclusions about the background question in the final conclusion which follows.

Prologue

The story begins with God. It is his *logos* which is the unifying feature of the entire plot. The movement of the story of salvation takes place in accordance with that which he has 'spoken', that which he finds 'fitting' and that which is 'necessary'. He speaks both through the prophets (1:1) and angels (2:2) of the old covenant and the mediator of the new (2:3). From beginning to end of story, God is the director of the drama, the one 'for whom and through whom' everything exists (2:10). He is the 'consuming fire' of judgement

(12:29) into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall (10:31), and his word is active and sharper than any sword in its analysis of the thoughts and intents of the heart (4:12).

At the heart of the story seems to be a plan, a purpose which was present before the 'creation' of the worlds. The author's conception of this creation itself lies in obscurity. The textual gaps surrounding the nature of creation and of Christ's role within that process are too great to reconstruct without speculation; nevertheless, we engaged in hypothesis under this caution, attempting to ascertain what the author might have thought in the light of other aspects of his thought. We thought it likely that the author, whether consciously or unconsciously, considered the created realm to be innately inferior to the heavenly, although not evil. We speculated whether this outlook might have been a worldview which the author brought with him to Christianity and which remained as a residue in the midst of his new Christian perspective. We wondered whether the author might have viewed the creation as the organisation of pre-existent matter, although we considered that its eventual destruction probably militated against this perspective. In either case, we concluded that it would not be a long journey from the author's thought to what would become the Gnosticism of the following century.

We based the above speculation upon the author's almost deprecatory tone towards 'that which has been created' (e. g. 12:27) and his perhaps unconscious association of the need for atonement with the foundation of the world (9:26). In addition, there does not seem to be a point in God's plan which did not entail the eventual coming of Christ. Death, as a function of the earthly realm, has impeded humanity from reaching its destined glory from their very creation. Hebrews does not speak of a time when Adam fell or when the Devil did not hold the power of death (2:14). The fundamental soteriology of the epistle is tied up with Christ's 'indestructible life' (7:16), his sinless life (4:15) in the midst of his learning of obedience (5:8). This salvation was not previously possible, for the one holding the power of this realm prevented any other possibility.

When the epistle speaks of Christ as the creator of the worlds, therefore, it speaks of him as the wisdom 'through which' God made them (1:2). Christ is also at the beginning and end of the plot, in some unexplained way present within God before the creation of the worlds, 'having neither beginning of days or end of life' (7:3). Yet Christ as pre-existent creator seems primarily to be a function of God's wisdom and word, as the language of 1:3 seems to indicate. Jesus is distinguished from God as creator in 2:10, demonstrating that the

author could at least subconsciously distinguish the two. Again, the textual gaps probably do not allow a firm conclusion, but one wonders whether Christ is this wisdom and *logos* in the sense that God has created the world with the primary intention of providing salvation through Christ. Christ stands as the true *end* of the creation and thus as its beginning purpose and direction, the very ground upon which the heavens and earth were founded.

The above considerations are some of the most important for pinpointing the author's background of thought. Unfortunately, they are also the most obscure and unelucidated aspects of the epistle. Their inaccessibility may possibly signal the unattainability of any thorough answer for the background question. We will nevertheless utilise the above recontruction in our epilogue, when we will attempt to form some conclusions on the background question.

Act I: 'Yesterday'

The first act within the drama of salvation history is the 'former' age, the time of the old covenant. God's word then to his people, the fathers of Israel, was 'spoken' through the prophets (1:1), and his Law was a 'word spoken through angels (2:2). These angels within that age were the 'ministers of those about to inherit salvation' (1:14), servants of the old covenant. As winds and flames of fire (1:7), their function in this role would only last as long as the first act of the plot, when their stewards would inherit salvation. The coming world, as opposed to this one, would not be subject to them (2:5).

The Law spoken through the mediatorship of angels was only a 'shadowy illustration' of the perfect work which God was going to perform in the second act of the story (8:5; 9:23). In every way it was sent as an indication of that which was to come. It was not able to 'perfect' those who wanted access to God (10:1), but awaited the entrance of a more perfect hope (7:19). It only contained a shadow of the good things to come (10:1). It was not a perfect image of those things

This 'shadow' which the Law contained was the Levitical priesthood, upon which the Law was enacted (7:11). The relationship between the two is inextricable to the extent that a change of the one necessitates a change in the other (7:12). As we have indicated in the prologue, these priests were hindered in their service by death (7:23), as well as by the fact that they also had sins which needed atonement (5:3; 7:26). They nevertheless continued to offer their gifts and sacrifices in a tabernacle which had been built upon God's command

through the revelation of a greater prototype to Moses (8:5), who was yet another servant in the house of God (3:5).

The people to whom Moses ministered and who followed him did not remain in God's covenant (8:9), however, but had evil hearts of disbelief (3:12) which prevented them from entering into God's 'rest' (3:18). Even this rest was not the true rest, for if Joshua had led God's people into their true homeland, God would not have spoken of another day (4:8). The wilderness generation, like Esau (12:16), did not believe (3:19), did not hold the substance of their faith in God unto the end (3:14), and their corpses fell in the desert (3:17).

There were, nevertheless, those who were faithful in the old age, in fact a great cloud of witnesses (12:1) who recognised that they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth (11:13). They were looking forward to their true, heavenly homeland (11:14, 16), a city which would remain (13:14), the heavenly Jerusalem, city of the living God (12:22). They all died in faith without having received God's promise (11:39-40), which he had tendered to Abraham and to his people throughout the first act of the plot (6:17-18). This was because God had planned all along to bring the perfection of all humanity in the eschaton through Christ (11:40).

The first tabernacle and its services, therefore, served symbolically as an indicator of the two covenants which God had planned (9:9). The outer tent, into which the priests went continually throughout the year (9:6), represented in a parable the first age (9:9) in which ineffectual gifts and sacrifices were offered only able to cleanse the flesh (9:10). Indeed, the first age was inextricably associated with the created realm and with the fleshly. As long as this foreign realm continues to stand (9:8), the old age can only be said to be 'near' its disappearance (8:13). None of these sacrifices and rituals can really be expected to take away sins, for bulls and goats are not capable of accomplishing such a task (10:4).

All of these aspects of the old age looked forward to something better, something truly efficacious. In and of themselves, they were all 'secure' and every transgression received its due punishment (2:2). They were innately inferior, however, to the heavenly solution which God was waiting to put into effect through Christ. The second act begins, therefore, in the consummation of the ages (9:26), with the climax of the plot, the entrance of the long expected Christ onto the stage, the attainment of God's purpose through a truly effective work and a true atonement for sins.

Act II
Scene 1: 'Today'

In the days of his flesh, God's heir apparent had demonstrated by his reverent fear (5:7) and sinless life (4:15) that he was qualified to be a Melchizedekian high priest. The one who was able to save him from death heard his petitions (5:7) and brought to realisation his destined 'indestructible life' (7:16). Humanity had been intended for glory and honour, but had 'not yet' achieved this status (2:8) because of the power of death, under the fear of which the seed of Abraham were living their whole lives (2:15). Christ, having been made lower than the angels for a little while, destroyed the one having this power of death (2:14) and was crowned with glory and honour, tasting of death for all of humanity (2:9). 'Today', he enters his destined role and thus leads many sons to their appointed glory (2:10). This 'today' is the 'last days' of Jeremiah, the time of the new covenant (8:8f.), the beginning of the eschatological age.

The rubric under which the achievement of glory and honour and all that goes with it can be placed, the ultimate statement of the salvific accomplishment of Christ in Hebrews, is the metaphor of Christ's high priesthood. The implications of this fulfilled priesthood are in fact the purpose of the author's entire argumentation (8:1). In more traditional Christian language, the author can speak of Christ having made an atonement (2:17) and can utilise texts commonly used within primitive Christianity such as Ps. 8 (2:6-8) and Ps. 2:7 (1:5). God has thus 'begotten' his Son 'today' as he pronounces the royal enthronement of Christ. He who had been heir apparent, awaiting his destined place in exaltation, has now been seated at the right hand of God (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), only awaiting for his enemies to be placed under his feet (10:13). All of these themes can be found elsewhere in the New Testament and demonstrate that the author is in touch with the traditions of the early church.

Psalm 110:1 more than any other traditional motif represents for the author the statement *par excellence* of Christ's conclusive achievement of atonement. The author takes this more typical expression of Christ's exalted messiahship and transforms it into a cultic metaphor. By speaking of Christ's exaltation and session as a metaphor for the entrance of a Melchizedekian high priest into a heavenly holy of holies, the author is able to contrast Christ directly with the Levitical priests and thus ultimately with the Law and 'old covenant' in general. He is thus able to consider the death and ascension of Christ as a sacrifice which was offered in a heavenly tabernacle, transforming all of these salvific actions into a single eschatological movement, in fact the climactic event of the entire

story of salvation history, the very 'consummation of the ages' (9:26) and the defeat of the Devil (2:14). By using this language, the author is able to amalgamate all of previous salvation history into one great shadow of this one consummative moment.

The formulation of this metaphor is nothing short of ingenious. The author must first find some basis for considering Christ a high priest, which he conveniently finds in Ps. 110. This psalm not only speaks of the exalted Messiah at God's right hand, but also refers to this king as a priest, after the order of Melchizedek. By coupling this text with Genesis 14, the author is able to argue that a priest like Melchizedek would be greater than a Levitical priest. From Ps. 110:4 he can also argue the 'indestructible life' of such a priest, finding another point of contrast with the earthly priests. He thus had a proof text which could be used as a basis for contrasting Christ with the Levitical priesthood and Law.

Once the author had established Christ as a superior priest, it was easy to relate the traditional motifs of atoning death and ascension/exaltation to the high priestly metaphor. As we have argued in chapter 5, a reading of the universe as the tabernacle of God allowed the author to see Christ's exaltation to God's right hand as an entrance into the heavenly holy of holies (9:12, 24) and as the offering *par exellence* of Christ as high priest (9:25; 10:12?). His death outside the camp (13:12) could thus be seen as a sacrifice for sins (10:5, 12?). There is a certain ambiguity in the author's thought as to whether the offering is the same as his death (9:27-28) or occurs in heaven (9:25), confirming that this language is metaphorical.

Tabernacle language in Hebrews, more than anything else, is used metaphorically to refer to entrance and access into God's presence. This fact is the fundamental reason why it is so difficult to pin down the author on the nature of an outer sanctum. We have argued that this is because such a tent has no place in the author's thinking or argument, except as a parable of an age about to vanish. In short, all of the language associated with the 'cultus' of the new covenant is a metaphorical reading of more traditional language in order to persuade the recipients of the epistle of the superiority of Christ's work to that of the Law and earthly cultus.

In terms of the story, therefore, the high priestly metaphor can be likened to one of two narrative 'objectifications' of the basic story utilised in Hebrews. As we have claimed in our opening chapter, any given story can be expressed in any one of several narrative forms, often turning on factors such as point of view and sequence. The author of Hebrews knows the traditional 'narrative',

involving atoning death, resurrection, and ascension. For the sake of his audience, however, he 'narrates'a form of the story which brings out the ways in which Christ's atonement achieves true forgiveness and cleansing over and against the shadowy, culticly orientated old covenant. He narrates the second act in the language of the first.

The key event of the plot, therefore, is the sacrifice of Christ. This offering provided a way 'through the veil' (10:20) and thus made access to God a present possibility for the people of God (10:19). The forgiveness of sins can be a present reality through Christ (10:22). Those who believe can in a sense be said already to have come to the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22f) because of the certainty of their salvation, if they only hold the substance firm until the end (3:14).

Unfortunately, while the recipients should no longer grant any status to the old covenant (9:8), should no longer rely upon the Levitical cultus or the Law for their relationship with God (13:9, 13), and even though the old covenant is obsolete and about to vanish (8:13), despite all this the 'present' age has not yet completely vanished (9:9)! This fact indicates that, while the people of God now have a better hope (7:19) and can even be said to have been perfected in a sense (10:14), they are still living in an in between time in which they are still strangers and foreigners to the world in which they live (11:13).

In the in between time of 'today', the people of God live in a relation with two different worlds. On the one hand, their physical bodies are in this world, and they still have need of endurance (10:36). On the other, their confidence is still focused on hoped for things which are as yet still unseen (11:1). Their loyalty and allegience is clearly directed toward their heavenly home (11:14-16) and toward their promised rest. 'Today', God has encourgaged them not to harden their hearts as the people of Israel long ago (3:7-8), but to hold fast (2:1) and beware of shrinking back unto destruction (10:39).

As characters within the plot of salvation history, the author and his recipients also live in the 'today' of the story. They too are confronted with the choice either to endure and be faithful or to abandon their confidence. All of the positive cloud of witnesses (11:1) as well as negative examples (3:16f.) stand before them to spell out the choice they must make as the people of God. The present situation in which the visible, foreign world would lure them away from the invisible, heavenly realities gives rise to the author's homily as he directs their attention toward what is truly lasting.

The in between time, therefore, is a time in which the visible realm deceptively speaks of the old age and covenant and might lead one to a false

sense of reality. The truth is that the new age has begun and that all hope is securely to be found in the invisible, heavenly realm. All of those who are truly faithful will abandon their confidence in the earthly and vanishing means of fleshly cleansing and will rely upon the true and permanent 'offering' of Christ.

Act 2
Scene 2: 'Forever'

In just a little while, the one who is coming will come and not delay (10:37). Christ is only waiting for his enemies to be put under his feet (10:13), when at the appropriate point he will be seen a second time in judgement (9:28). At that time, the consuming fire which is God (12:29) will shake the created heavens and earth, removing all that is shakeable so that God's heavenly, unshakeable kingdom will remain (12:26-27), removing once and for all the 'outer tent' where access to God is obscured by that which has been made (9:8).

At this time, the people of God will truly and conclusively enter into their appointed rest (4:11). Their perfected spirits will join ten thousand angels in festal gathering in the assembly of firstborn sons at the heavenly Jerusalem, the true Zion, the city of the living God (12:22-23). This is the place of glory to which Christ is leading them as brothers (2:10), their destined place in God's order (2:6-8). This coming world of salvation will be subjected to them (2:5) and they, like Christ, will presumably be exalted above the angels (2:16).

The whole of the story is directed toward the above conclusion. As the beginnings of the story are clouded by the unspoken thoughts of the author, so the end of the story is not elucidated beyond its broadest characteristics as the ultimate rest of God's people. What is certain, however, is that the Christ who is present at the beginning of the plot as the wisdom 'through whom' God made the world is also present at the end as the Son whom God has appointed as 'heir of all things' (1:2).

CONCLUSION II
The Background of Hebrews

I. *Introduction*

Although our study found its original impetus in the background question, we determined at an early stage that substantial progress on this issue could be greatly facilitated by a holistic study of the epistle in an effort to reconstruct its 'thought world'. The pursuit of the author's thought world thus gave rise to a study valid in its own right, though intermediate to our ultimate desire to shed light on the background question. The first conclusion to this dissertation, therefore, brought together the findings of the preceding chapters in an episodic form, which we thought appropriate to the nature of the investigation. We have not yet, however, brought together those aspects of our study which promise to illuminate the issue of milieu. This question has always stood somewhere in the background of our investigation, although we have not focused on it directly.

Given the fact that our investigation proceeds from the desire to answer the background question, our study would clearly not be complete without at least some general observations on the way in which our conclusions might relate to this issue. In the remaining pages, therefore, I will attempt to sketch out in broad terms some general inferences which follow from our investigation of the epistle's narrative world. To explore the issue fully, however, would require another study of at least equal length which would focus on the background literature in the light of this present study.

Before we commence upon our suggestions for such a study, it will be helpful to summarise those conclusions of our investigation which relate in some way to the background question. These can be grouped roughly into two general categories, namely, those conclusions which relate to the characterisation of Christ as a high priest and those which relate to the epistle's 'cosmology'.

A. The high priest motif

In our opinion, one of the more significant findings of our study has been the metaphorical nature of high priestly language in the epistle. We have not only noted that this imagery is metaphorical by very definition, but we have also claimed that the author consistently gives indications that he himself does not conceive of such language in a completely literal fashion. The language is primarily rhetorical in function and is used because it enables the author to make a persuasive argument.

As we noted in chapter 2,[1] language of high priesthood is metaphorical by definition because it takes certain traditional language and expresses it in new semantic terms. The author takes a crucifixion (already thought of metaphorically as a sacrifice with atoning value; see Rom. 3:25) and traditional language involving the ascension and session of Christ to the right hand of God and expresses these things metaphorically as a sacrifice and an entrance into a heavenly holy of holies.[2] While there are precedents upon which the author can base these restatements (e. g. traditions of a heavenly sanctuary and the already existent sacrificial metaphor), the author does not seem to be following a tradition in his specific use of the ideas.

The author has an avowed interest in arguing for the superiority of the atoning work of Christ over that of the Old Testament cultus. This interest is not simply one heading in a theological tractate; it stands at the heart of the author's paraenetic purpose, leading to certain conclusions about the audience, as we shall note below. The fact that the author wishes to argue for Christ's atoning work over that of that of the Levitical cultus thus provides the principal *motive* for his metaphorical venture.

As we have argued, the author could easily translate Christ's sacrificial death into an offering presented by Christ himself and Christ's passage into heaven into an entrance into the 'true' holy of holies. Language of atonement, seemingly used in the Christian tradition from the earliest point, perhaps even in the teaching of the historical Jesus, utilised a sacrificial metaphor and had certain precedents in language used of the Maccabean martyrs. In addition, we have demonstrated in chapter 5 that there were traditions surrounding a heavenly tabernacle which made it possible to consider Christ's ascension as passage through a tabernacle.[3] The author does not use any of this language rigidly, for it serves for him the very practical purpose of pitting the Law, Levitical cultus, and old covenant in general against the efficacious work of Christ.

The missing link in the author's scheme, therefore, was the need to find some biblical precedent for depicting Christ as a high priest in the first place. While Qumran and *TLevi* present backgrounds which know of a priestly messiah, the author of Hebrews found, on the contrary, his proof text in the Old Testament tradition surrounding Melchizedek. As we have argued,[4] throughout Hebrews 7

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[1]See chapter 2, pp. 62-63.

[2]I am of course not at all denying that the language which the author was transforming was already metaphorical. He, however, metaphorises it even further.

[3]See chapter 5, pp. 150-51, 173, 186-87.

[4]See chapter 2, pp. 74-77.

Melchizedek is merely a foil by which the priesthood of Christ can be put forward. It is the Melchizedek of the text which was the author's concern, rather than the historical figure.

All of the above comes together in an extended metaphor of high priesthood. The author wants to argue for the superiority of Christ's atonement over the Levitical cultus. In order to do so, he develops an already existing Christian metaphor which viewed Christ's death as a sacrifice. There were widespread traditions which viewed the universe as God's real temple, presenting a ready made opportunity to consider Christ's ascension as an entrance into a heavenly holy of holies. The author finds in Melchizedek a foil who can be used to show the superiority of Christ's high priesthood over that of earthly priests. All of these factors come together to enable the author to argue effectively that his audience cease to rely upon the antiquated Levitical means of approach to God and instead rely solely upon the work of Christ. The author has thereby activated an important potentiality of the tradition in response to a pastoral situation, resulting in a new expression for Christ's work which will itself then be developed in the subsequent tradition.[5]

B. The epistle's 'cosmology'

There would seem to be at least four aspects of our study into the epistle's cosmology which are in some way significant for the background question. The first of these is helpful because it eliminates an important option. While we do see certain parallels between Philo and our author, the author does not (at least explicitly) conceive of the heavenly tabernacle according to a Platonic pattern. We have argued on the contrary that the paradigm closest to that of the author is the cosmological model of the tabernacle, although in the end the author is not really concerned with the exact nature of a heavenly 'structure'. Rather, the tabernacle serves principally as a necessary vehicle for the author's high priestly metaphor. Despite certain parallels which we will discuss below, therefore, Platonism and Philonism do not play an appreciable role in the argument of the epistle.

A more important aspect of the epistle's cosmology which will be helpful in a discussion of background is the fact that Hebrews envisages the destruction of created realm at the time of the full arrival of the eschaton.[6] Hebrews does not

[5]My wording here has been influenced by reflection on a stimulating paper entitled 'Change in Christology: New Testament Models and the Contemporary Task', read by J. F. McGrath in the New Testament seminar at the University of Durham, Spring 1996.

[6]See chapter 4, pp. 126-27.

seem to fall within a tradition which believes in the renewal of the heavens and earth or of the descent of a heavenly Jerusalem to the earth. Rather, the epistle expects the 'shaking' of the created heavens and earth so that only the unshakeable heaven will remain. Such an idea is rare, although not singular, in the background literature, probably occuring in *2 Enoch* 65:6 and certainly in later Gnostic texts. It is helpful to us as a possible indication of the trajectory of the epistle and also constitutes a difference between our author and Philo.

Thirdly, another relevant aspect of the 'cosmology' of the epistle is the seemingly exclusive association of spirits with the heavenly realm rather than bodies of some sort. There is no indication of such a thing as a spiritual body as in Paul; rather, the author gives every indication that physicality is a solely earthly characteristic. If this is the case, the epistle is further distanced from Philo, who saw the attainment of heaven as the reaching of the mind thereto while in the body. Further, the evidence seems to accumulate which places Hebrews on a similar trajectory to later Gnosticism. We have also seen that the epistle has a certain rational flavour which fits in as well with this trajectory, while also seeming parallel to the Alexandrian literature.

Finally, we have speculated whether the created realm could have ever been considered anything other than transitory in the author's worldview. We suggested in chapter 4 that while the earthly realm was not evil to the author, it was innately inferior. The author gives several hints that he associates the created realm *qua* created with the need for atonement (9:26; 12:27). While the author may have something like a Fall in his unspoken theology, one wonders whether this might be a point at which a previous worldview has not been fully modified in the light of Christian conversion. As it stands, this created realm is the place of death where the Devil holds power. In the light of God's constant purpose to redeem humanity and given that Christ is the embodiment of the wisdom of God for humankind in creation, could the author see the transitory nature of the created realm as anything other than a part of the overall purpose of God?

II. *The Principal Background: Early Christianity*

It is our contention that this study has demonstrated that the principal background of Hebrews is none other than early Christianity, as a more pointed comparison to the New Testament most certainly would also show. This conclusion should not come as any surprise. A quick observation of the author's use of traditional material such as messianic psalms and motifs such as Christ's sacrificial death show an obvious indebtedness to early Christianity. If

we are correct to view Hebrews as a restatement of traditional Christian language in cultic terms, then the connection between the author and early Christianity becomes even stronger. Below are some suggestions as to what that connection might have been in more concrete terms.

A. The use of traditional material

1. The Septuagint

The author's indebtedness to the LXX is clear and would be acknowledged by all.[7] To say this, of course, is to say nothing of the author's hermeneutical principals, which would be more helpful in identifying his background. It is only to acknowledge that the Old Testament plays a crucial and fundamental role in his thinking, as well as to pinpoint the author as someone who probably felt more comfortable with the Greek language over and against Hebrew or Aramaic.[8] As Marie Isaacs has noted, Hebrews has the most sophisticated literary style of any book in the New Testament.[9] We have also tried in general to substantiate throughout, in support of Walter Übelacker[10] and Keijo Nissalä,[11] that the author had at least some knowledge of rhetorical canons and thus that the author quite probably had at least a standard hellenistic education.[12]

While our study has not actively engaged in an investigation of the author's use of the Old Testament, we can say that the author does share with early Christianity a groundedness in the Hebrew Scriptures. Along with the earliest strata of the New Testament, he interprets these Scriptures with a view to Christ.

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[7]For a recent treatment, see W. L. Lane's commentary, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word (Dallas: Word, 1991) cxii-cxxiv, as also P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 37-42. For older discussions, see S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961) 57f (although Kistemaker notes a few places where the author is closer to a Greek version of the Masoretic text); F. Schröger, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1968) 247ff; and R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 164f.

[8]So M. Isaacs, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTSS 73 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992) 46.

[9]*Space* 46.

[10]*Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: Untersuchungen zu* exordium, narratio, *und* postscriptum *(Hebr 1-2 und 13,22-25)* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1989).

[11]*Das Hohepriestermotiv im Hebräerbrief: Eine exegetische Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Oy Liiton Kirjapaino, 1979).

[12]So also A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913) 31.

We have noted the enthronement/exaltation overtones of the author's use of psalms like 45:6-7 (44:7-8 LXX) and 102:25-27 (101:26-28), which demonstrate a predilection on the part of the author to view the Old Testament messianically.[13] Besides examples such as these which are unique to the author, he also uses proof texts which appear in Paul and other New Testament authors.

The author shares Ps. 2:7 in common with Acts 13:33 (where it is interestingly put on the lips of Paul) and also uses it in a post-resurrection context. Like Paul, he refers to Hab. 2:3-4 (LXX), although with a different focus. Most significantly, he connects Ps. 110:1 with Ps. 8 in a way highly reminiscent of the Pauline corpus, as we shall discuss next. These common proof texts demonstrate that the author is at least in contact with early Christianity, perhaps with some form of Pauline Christianity in particular. It is to parallels to the Pauline corpus, therefore, that we now turn.

2. The Pauline corpus

The linking of Ps. 8 with Ps. 110:1 demonstrates a definite connection of Hebrews with early Christianity. On the one hand, Hebrews' use of Ps. 8 is in and of itself quite reminiscent of Paul. In Hebrews, Christ fulfils the psalm for all of humanity, in turn helping them to reach their destined state of glory. This same basic theology is expressed in Paul through the use of Last Adam imagery (e. g. 1 Cor. 15; Rom. 5). As Dunn notes of the allusion to Ps. 8:6 in Phil. 3:21, 'The glory which Christ received on exaltation was not for himself alone'.[14] As this original Pauline reference to the psalm indicates (independent of Ps. 110:1), Paul clearly believed that the glory of Ps. 8 was eventually to be passed on to Christians through Christ. This similarity in thought indicates a strong continuity on the part of the author with the early Christianity represented by Paul.

The link of Ps. 8 with Ps. 110:1 further strengthens this case for continuity. As we have mentioned several times throughout our study, the connection of the two psalms was a regular feature of early Christianity and of the Pauline corpus in particular.[15] As with Paul, the author indicates Christ's attainment of the 'glory and honour' of Ps. 8 by speaking of the exalted Christ who now reigns at the right hand of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:25-27), only awaiting for his enemies to be

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[13]See chapter 2, p. 58-60.

[14]*Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed (London: SCM, 1989) 109.

[15]See chapter 3, p. 86-87.

put under his feet (Heb. 10:13). The author even includes the traditional motif of Christ's intercession at the right hand of God (cf. Rom. 8:34), even though it creates a minor tension with his metaphor of high priesthood.[16] At least in these respects, the author gives strong indications that his theology is born within the matrix of 'traditional' Christianity.

The similarity of Heb. 2:17 to Rom. 3:25 demonstrates that the author is also in touch with other long standing Christian traditions.[17] The idea in Romans that Christ's death has atoning value has long been thought to have been a pre-Pauline datum[18] (which Paul by and large does not develop).[19] Dunn argues convincingly that regardless of whether Paul may have been conscious of a tradition which considered the deaths of the Maccabean martyrs to be atoning (e. g. *4 Macc.* 17:21-22), Paul certainly would have understood Christ's death as a sacrifice in Day of Atonement terms.[20] One sees here how 'ripe' the early Christian tradition was for a high priestly metaphor. In a situation in which the author believed his audience to lack somewhat in their appreciation of the atoning significance of Christ's death and to be at least sympathetic to Levitical means of atonement in their theology, the author sees the opportunity to extend the metaphor of sacrifice even further than previous utilisation. While Rom. 3:25 envisages Christ's death as a sacrifice offered *by God*, the author transforms the metaphor into one offered *by Christ himself* as high priest. Christ comes to be both the offering and the one offering it. If in fact Heb. 2:17-18 is the main proposition and central thesis of the epistle,[21] then one can reasonably conclude that the author has based his whole argument upon the foundation of a traditional datum of Christian soteriology, thus strongly connecting him to early Christianity.

Another motif which Hebrews seems to share with early Christianity is a use of wisdom motifs. When the epistle states that Christ is the one 'through whom God made the worlds' (1:2) or that he is the 'reflection of God's glory and the

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[16]See chapter 1, p. 29.

[17]B. Longenecker, Cambridge University, was the first to draw my attention to this commonality in drawing from early Christian tradition (1994).

[18]Thus Dunn: 'The fact that Paul can put this forward as a bare assertion, without substantive supporting argument, confirms that the pre-Pauline formula expressed a fundamental element of the confession of the first Christian churches', *Romans 1-8*, Word (Dallas: Word, 1988) 164.

[19]I accept E. P. Sanders' arguments to the effect that Paul is most 'at home' when using 'participationist' language with reference to Christ, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977) 438ff. Cf. Heb. 3:14.

[20]*Romans 1-8* 171.

[21]So Übelacker, *Appell* 193-96.

stamp of his substance' (1:3), the author shows that he is in touch with the same traditions which appear in 1 Cor. 8:6, 2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15, and which appear with slightly different force in John 1. Since we have suggested here[22] and elsewhere[23] that the author speaks of Christ as the agent of creation because Christ embodies God's wisdom toward his world and humanity, a potential source of illumination for wisdom motifs in the Pauline corpus becomes possible.[24] Who knows whether the author of Hebrews could even have been the ultimate point of origin for such motifs? At the very least, the author demonstrates once more that he is in contact with the traditions of early Christianity and the Pauline corpus.[25]

Since there are of course aspects of Pauline thought which are a matter of debate, it is impossible to conclude on all scores the nearness or distance of Hebrews from Pauline thought in particular. The πίστις Χριστοῦ discussion in particular provides an interesting area for future exploration.[26] If this expression has at least at times a subjective connotation in Paul, then another possibility for a connection between Hebrews and Paul is opened up. Heb. 2:13 in particular indicates a salvific situation in which there exists a connection between the trust of Christ in God and the salvation of the children whom God has given to him, who are all ἐξ ἑνός. This is of course not the time to pursue such connections in detail.

In short, there are ample reasons for seeing Hebrews as a natural descendent of early Christianity and even to pose an interaction of some sort with Pauline theology, although this point is less clear. Certainly this brief survey leaves ample room for those who have for a long time viewed with great interest the association of the author with a Timothy (13:23) and have supposed this person to have been the travelling companion of Paul.

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[22]See chapter 2, n. 24; chapter 4, pp. 138-39; and conclusion 1, pp. 195-96.

[23]'Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in the Epistle to the Hebrews', paper read at S.B.L. in the Autumn of 1995.

[24]For an examination of how this might work in respect to the Colossian hymn, see Dunn's new commentary, *The Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NICGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 91.

[25]We could also note other similarities to Colossians beyond the hymn. Col. 2:17-3:2 in particular offer numerous parallels to Hebrews.

[26]For the present state of the discussion, see the articles by R. B. Hays, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?' and J. D. G. Dunn, 'Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΟΥ' in the SBL Seminar Papers, 1991 (714-744).

B. The author and 'Hellenistic' Christianity

Manson suggested as early as 1949 that the author of Hebrews might have been a Hellenist and noted the similarities between Stephen's speech in Acts 7 and the theology of Hebrews.[27] Noting that Acts 6:1 divides Jerusalem Christians into 'Hebrews' and 'Hellenists',[28] Manson explored the basic concern of Stephen as narrated in Acts, concluding that Stephen was not opposed to the temple *per se*, but that he believed the Jewish people (and by implication the Hebrews) to have mistaken it for a *permanent* rather than a temporary, symbolic structure.[29] *In toto*, Manson offered eight similarities between Hebrews and Acts 7,[30] which have been modified and supplemented by Lincoln Hurst.[31]

Rather than review these suggestions, it will be more helpful to point out places where our study has illuminated or exemplified in some way parallels between the two:

1. The disobedience of God's people as illustrative

While there are hints of a motif in Acts 7 which implies the continual alienation of the one whom God sends, the focus of this language is on the continual disbelief of God's people when he reveals himself to them. In terms of the alienation of the faithful, Abraham is told to depart from his land (7:3) and does not actually obtain 'a space for his foot' (7:5) in his promised country. His seed were 'πάροικον' in Egypt (7:6), and Moses is forced into exile because of the unbelief of God's people (7:29). The principal purpose of this language within the narrative would seem to be Stephen's desire to 'shame' his audience by noting their similarity to those who have continually disbelieved God's revelation. God sent Moses to rescue them, but they did not accept either his leadership (7:25, 39) or the Law delivered through angels (7:53).

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[27]In the 1949 Baird Lectureship, published as *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951).

[28]*Hebrews* 27-28.

[29]*Hebrews* 34f. When I refer to Stephen throughout this section, it should always be understood that I am referring principally to the *character* Stephen *as narrated* in Acts rather than the historical figure. I assume that this narrated figure probably does relate in some way to a group within early Christianity known by the author of Acts as 'Hellenists'.

[30]*Hebrews* 36.

[31]*The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*, SNTSMS 65 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990) 94f.

Admittedly, Hebrews' formulation of the alienation of God's people is developed along different lines from Acts, for it is made in terms of a cosmological distinction unfound in Acts 7. Hebrews also does not have the specific purpose of demonstrating the *typical* rejection of those sent by God. There is, however, a similar glance back to salvation history and the wilderness generation in particular in order to exhort those who are in the present. The exhortation differs between Hebrews and Acts because the admonition is directed at different groups in the present time. While Stephen's speech is directed toward those who will also inevitably reject the message, Hebrews is directed to those whom the author feels will not follow the example of those who have gone before. Rather, he hopes that they will join the company of that rejected group who have in fact accepted and received the revelation sent by God.

2. The deliverance of the Law through an angel(s)

Acts 7:30, 35, 38, and 53 indicate, along with Gal. 3:19 and Heb. 2:2, that there was a tradition in the first century which believed the Law to have been delivered through angel mediation. The occurrence in and of itself in Hebrews and Acts, therefore, is not necessarily instructive of any special commonality, although Hurst has noted that it is only in Hebrews and Acts 7 that such a datum is associated with the disobedience of God's people.[32]

3. The use of the wilderness tabernacle

It should always be noted that Hebrews does not ever explicitly refer to the temple, a point sometimes not fully taken into account in discussions of the epistle.[33] In keeping with our general findings, the author likely uses the tabernacle because of its clear associations with the giving of the Law and the founding of the earthly cultus. It can represent the inception of that Levitical priesthood with which the later temple was at best in continuity, and which at worst was a corruption or misunderstanding. Both the first and the second temples must in any case undoubtedly be associated with the old covenant which has now been superceded by Christ.

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[32]*Background* 103.

[33]Dr. David Bauer first impressed this fact upon me (Asbury Theological Seminary, 1989). Hurst's monograph, *Background* 30-31, for example, does not even seem to note this distinction in his discussion of parallels in the background literature (e.g. the temple of *4 Ezra* or *2 Baruch*, which is not about a heavenly *tabernacle*), as is also the case with G. MacRae's 'The Heavenly Temple and Eschatology in the Letter to the Hebrews', *Semeia* 12 (1978) 179-99.

The tabernacle, therefore, can easily be thought to represent all the earthly sanctuaries of the old covenant, both past and present. Even in the author's concluding exhortations, he maintains this tabernacle language, even though it would seem to be symbolic in some way of the present situation which the author is addressing (13:9ff). In all this discussion, the tabernacle is able to bring into focus the secondary nature of the earthly cultus, for this tent was made after a heavenly precedent (Ex. 29:40).

There are some obvious similarities between Hebrews' use of the tabernacle and that of Acts 7. Acts 7, for example, is the only other place in the New Testament which notes that Moses was instructed to make the tabernacle after a pattern he had seen. While it is not entirely clear whether Stephen was antipathetic to the Solomonic and second temple *in and of themselves*,[34] the tabernacle represents for him at the very least the fact that God does not have a 'τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεως' upon the earth (7:49). While Stephen does not explicitly condemn the building of a temple outright, it is clear that he takes exception to anyone who would think God to be 'located' in such a structure. In a slightly different way than Hebrews, therefore, Acts also indicates that the earthly tabernacle points to a greater reality and that one must look beyond the earthly house to find the reality of God's presence.

The way in which Acts 7 indicates the nature of the real 'house' of God is helpful, for it gels with our findings with regard to Hebrews. For Acts, not only is the earthly temple described similarly to Hebrews' description of the wilderness tabernacle, namely, as χειροποίητος (Acts 7:48; Heb. 9:11, 24), but God's real house is said to be the universe itself. Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool (Acts 7:49). While Is. 66:1 is not explicitly connected to the distinction between outer and inner court here, this would be an obvious way of understanding it. Herein is a close analogy to what we have suggested as the nearest model for understanding the paradigmatic tabernacle in Hebrews. Acts 7, even more than Hebrews, is not interested in a close comparison of the 'structure' of God's true dwelling with earthly sanctuaries. Its point is that the real significance of the tabernacle was in fact to point to the greater reality of God's 'omnipresence' and habitation within the whole universe.

Acts 7 and Hebrews, therefore, share a common emphasis on the 'parabolic' nature of the wilderness tabernacle. In both instances, it would be wrong to mistake an earthly structure for the real dwelling place of God. God's throne is in heaven and earthly sanctuaries only allude to this fact in some way. The opposition in the narrative of Acts to Stephen by Greek speaking synagogues and Alexandrians (6:9), if it have any historical basis, indicates that these

[34]*Background* 97.

viewpoints might not necessarily be Hellenistic *Jewish* opinions but could be what might be called Hellenistic Jewish *Christian* thinking.[35] If there was such a stream of early Christian thought, then our author would seem to stand within it. The differences in concern between Stephen and Hebrews should not be allowed to obscure a significant commonality over and against the concerns of other early Christian traditions.[36]

4. Attitude to sacrifice

Acts 7 does not make completely explicit a 'Hellenistic' view of sacrifice, although given Stephen's standpoint in this text on the nature of earthly sanctuaries, it does not seem impossible to piece together what such an individual would think about the sacrifices offered in them, at least in the mind of the author of Acts. Stephen does seem to consider the Law delivered by angels to have been, on the one hand, a valid revelation from God (7:53). On the other hand, he seems to believe Israel to have to have made a turn for the idolatrous from the very reception of this Law. Acts 7:42 seems to indicate that Stephen considered the sacrifices of Israel never to have been offered to God, but rather to the hosts of heaven.[37] While the Law was delivered through angels, therefore, Israel had never kept it.

This perspective seems somewhat different from that explicitly stated in Hebrews, for the epistle does not explicitly disparage Levitical sacrifices in and of themselves. It merely considers them outdated. The author, nevertheless, gives several indications that he may have the same general attitude of Stephen, even if his rhetorical agenda did not bring him to the same polemical expression. Heb. 13:15-16, for example, allude to Ps. 50 (49):14, exhorting the audience to offer sacrifices of praise to God. 'Sacrifices' such as these are well pleasing to God. Heb. 10:5f is clearly a traditional 'anti-sacrificial' text long used by those who felt a mechanical temple service to miss the real point. Interestingly, the author uses ταῦρος in reference to the sacrificial blood offered under the old covenant (9:13). This term, however, never occurs in a sacrificial context in the

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[35]Cf. C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, vol. 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 320: 'it was not Stephen's Hellenism but Stephen's Christianity that (in Luke's view) provoked opposition.'

[36]There is also a group within scholarship on Hebrews which sees a close relationship between its form of Christianity and that of the Gospel of John (cf. the comparison of C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, vol. 1 [Paris: Gabalda, 1952] 92-138). B. W. Bacon's commentary on John was even entitled, *The Gospel of the Hellenists* (New York: Holt, 1933). R. E. Brown also follows in this general train in *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) 141.

[37]So Barrett, *Acts* 368-69: 'sacrifices such as are offered in the Temple are no necessary, or even desirable, part of the true worship of God; they were not used in the ideal period of Israel's life.'

Pentateuch, while it does occur in texts like Ps. 50 (49 LXX):13 and Is. 1:11, both 'anti-sacrificial' texts.[38] This conglomeration of texts and allusions seems to indicate a certain underlying attitude toward sacrifices in general, even if the author does not state such explicitly.

Without attempting to define too specifically what the author of Hebrews' underlying attitude might be, it seems clear enough that he shares a certain critical viewpoint in common with Stephen (as depicted in Acts) toward earthly sacrificial practice. When one couples this perspective with their attitudes toward earthly sanctuaries, it seems possible to see them as representing a certain common attitude within the early church.[39] While we cannot delineate such a tradition with much specificity, it seems clear that there was a group within early Christianity that found it easier to break with the temple practice of Judaism than other traditions within early Christianity did, such as that group represented by James and the 'Hebrews' of Acts 6. If the testimony of Acts 21-22 has any basis in history at all, even Paul had more congenial feelings toward this earthly structure than the group depicted in Acts 6 as the Hellenists. Considerations such as these may 'place' Hebrews within early Christianity and expand our knowledge of the early church at large.

5. The allusion to Ps. 110:1

Two other lesser commonalities between Hebrews and Acts 7 should be noted before we conclude this section. The first is the fact that Acts 7, like Hebrews, uses Ps. 110:1 as an indication of the one at the right hand of God to whom we are to 'look' (Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 12:2),[40] who is now the exalted Messiah. We know the 'high priestly' role which this verse will play within Hebrews' argument. Did it have a broader history in this capacity within Hellenistic Christianity?

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[38]As we have noted above, the author alludes to Ps. 50 in 13:15. See chapter 2, n. 64.

[39]Dunn writes, 'the speech is so distinctive within Acts and chapters 6-8 contain such distinctive features that the most plausible view is that Luke is here drawing on a source which has preserved quite accurately the views of the Hellenists or even Stephen in particular with regard to the temple', *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1990) 270.

[40]Manson, *Hebrews* 36 and Hurst, *Background* 94.

6. The association of spirit with heaven

A second interesting aspect of the narrative in Acts-7 is the fact that at the point of death, Stephen prays to Jesus to 'receive my spirit', as if the author 'presupposed that the person has a πνεῦμα which survives the death of the body so that it may be entrusted to the divine protector.'[41] Such a view, while it would seem to be distinguishable from Paul's view in 1 Cor. 15:35f. and Phil. 3:21, seems analogous to that of Hebrews, where it is the spirits of those who are perfected which will arrive at the heavenly Jerusalem (12:23).[42] Did Hellenists in general share such a 'psychological' outlook? The presence of an Alexandrian synogogue in Jerusalem is intriguing and could indicate that there were 'philosophical' influences at work on a popular level on or within a certain group of early Christians.

The six points mentioned above form an impressive commonality between Hebrews and Acts 7. Most importantly, they demonstrate a certain attitude toward the earthly, Levitical cultus which the author of Hebrews has in common with the characters usually described as the Hellenists in the narrative of Acts. Since there are no other characters in Acts to whom the author gives such viewpoints, it would seem likely that the author of Acts is indeed attempting to describe a particular viewpoint toward the temple and its cultus which existed within the matrix of early Christianity.[43] If so, then it makes sense to see the author of Hebrews as belonging to or falling within the influence of this 'group', a surmise which is supported by the author's proficiency with the Greek language.

We have indicated in chapter 5 that the author of Hebrews is not really interested in a heavenly tabernacle *qua* tabernacle.[44] He is interested in the atoning work of Christ. Heaven is God's throne and earth is his footstool; this is the only tabernacle with which Hebrews is concerned. The tabernacle argument for him is a rhetorical device appropriate in the persuasion of his listeners. One wonders whether, if the author were not attempting to relate to the situation at

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[41]So also Barrett, *Acts* 387.

[42]See chapter 4, pp. 133-34.

[43]Note, however, Paul's comment in Acts 17:24-25, 'the God who made the world and everything in them, this Lord possessing heaven and earth does not dwell in hand made [χειροποιήτοις] temples, nor is he served by human hands, as if needing something'. Paul's attitudes here sound a bit like Stephen in chapter 7.

[44]See chapter 5, pp. 184, 187-88.

hand, he might not have expressed his theology in high priestly terms at all. To consider Heb. 1-2 as a *narratio* which gives a preview/overview of the case, is perhaps to see in Hebrews a rhetorical structure which first states the Christology and soteriology of the author in his more usual terminology, only then to restate the same in metaphorical language as the author attempts to persuade his audience.

C. The audience and 'Hebrew' Christianity

The precise situation of the recipients of Hebrews is ambiguous, and we can know even less of their theology than we can about the author's. There are nevertheless certain aspects of the epistle which would seem to be relevant to delineating their theology and the situation which the author perceives among them. Since a full investigation would require another study, it will suffice here merely to note ways in which our examination of the epistle suggests profitable directions in the quest for the recipients of Hebrews.

First of all, George MacRae demonstrated great insight when he suggested that some of the complex imagery of the epistle might result from a difference in worldview or outlook between the author and his audience.[45] We noted in chapter 5 that while MacRae's Platonic/apocalyptic distinction was subject to several critiques, a cosmological/apocalyptic differentiation of author and audience could explain certain ambiguities in the author's argument surrounding the nature of the outer sanctum of the paradigmatic tabernacle. A more general distinction between a 'Hellenist' author and a 'Hebrew' audience would seem to provide an even more helpful framework from which to understand the epistle's rhetorical dynamics, as long as these terms are not taken too rigidly in relation to Acts 6.[46] Raymond Brown's 'Group 2' might also relate in some way to such a broad distinction,[47] at least in terms of the social forces acting upon the recipients of Hebrews, although Brown defined this group largely in terms of the attitudes of certain Jewish Christians toward Gentiles.[48] It is not difficult to conjecture, however, what the attitude of Jews (and Gentiles) within such a group would have been toward their Jewish past, undoubtedly

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[45]'Heavenly Temple' 179f.

[46]So R. E. Glaze Jr., *No Easy Salvation* (Zachary, LA: Insight, 1966) 22ff and Brown, *Antioch and Rome* 140-42.

[47]Mentioned in the introduction, pp. 16-17, *Antioch and Rome* 3.

[48]Primarily in terms of the way in which James and Peter are depicted in Acts 15 and Gal. 2. He is of course careful not to restrict the ethnic identity of any of these groups to either Jews or the Gentiles (cf. 142 n. 303).

involving a high tendency to retain the significance and practice of what the author of Hebrews could only consider aspects of the 'old covenant'.

While the main emphasis of the paraenesis in Hebrews is on the need for endurance and faithfulness on the part of the congregation addressed (e. g. 10:35-11:12:2), these exhortations are formulated in such a way as to indicate the nature of the readers 'dullness' (5:11). First of all, given the fact that all of the scriptural exposition in Hebrews can be grouped in terms of an old/new covenant distinction, it becomes difficult to deny that the focus of concern is, in the thinking of the author, the audience's (mis)appropriation of the significance of Christ. Since angels are associated with the giving of the Law (2:2), since Moses is also the great lawgiver (3:1-6), since the Levitical cultus and earthly tabernacle are the heart of the Law (7:1-10:18), it is overwhelmingly likely that the author's concern for his audience is located precisely in the fact that they are, in his view, in danger of not properly maintaining the transition from old to new covenant, perhaps in their sympathy toward or continuance of practices and views associated by him with the Law and old covenant. While some of them may be neglecting to meet together on the Lord's Day (10:25), one might easily suppose that they are still attending the synagogue on the sabbath. The metaphor of high priesthood in particular seems to demonstrate a drive on the part of the author to relate and contrast traditional Christian theology directly to the whole of the Law and old covenant. These aspects of the epistle's exposition, therefore, find a plausible explanation in a failure on the part of the target audience to appropriate fully the significance of Christ, at least from the author's Hellenist point of view.

This reading of the situation is also supported by the author's central exhortation in 5:11-6:12, where he complains that the recipients need to be retaught the first principles of basic Christianity (5:12). Similarly, a falling away from the knowledge of the truth is formulated as a recrucifixion of the Son of God and an exposing of him to public shame (6:6). It is to despise the Son of God and to defile the blood of the covenant (10:29). This focus on the Son of God is also reflected in the author's admonitions to hold fast to the 'confession' (4:14; 10:23). The author may believe that his recipients do not realise that any reliance upon old covenant means is an affront to the Son of God. In any case, it seems likely that the author believes his audience to be faltering in their appropriation of the implications of Christ's death.

Secondly, it would seem that this waning in faithfulness has not arisen in a vacuum but has resulted in some way from circumstances now facing the recipients of the epistle. Although it is difficult to decipher the epistle's cryptic allusions, it is clear that the recipients had clearly suffered and had their property confiscated at some time in the past (10:32-34). While they had not at

that time resisted to the point of death (12:4), it would seem likely that those who first spoke the word of God to them had been imprisoned (10:34) and suffered death (2:3?;13:7).

In the present, they would seem to be undergoing some sort of 'discipline' by the Lord (12:5-7), presumably one which involves shame in the eyes of those Jews who still consider the old covenant to be in force (12:2; 13:33). The audience are encouraged not to rely upon βρώματα, a word the epistle links with the regulations of the old covenant and its tabernacle (9:10; 13:9-10). They are encouraged not to rely upon the earthly Jerusalem (12:18f.; 13:14), but to look to their heavenly inheritance. Whatever the situation behind these references, it has evidently led to conflict with their leaders (13:17), who would seem to agree with the author.

The situation of the recipients of the epistle, therefore, is not as accessible as the theology of the author. Even greater speculation will be necessary in delineating their ideology than involved in the quest for the author's background. We must therefore allow our study to stand with these basic conclusions and let further investigation wait for another time.

III. *Hebrews and Other Backgrounds*

Since our study has been text-orientated, we have only addressed matters of background as they have become important in making various exegetical decisions. Now that our investigation is concluded, however, it would be possible to engage in a deeper comparison of Hebrews with the background literature, placing the epistle more clearly against its first century context. Such a study is of course beyond the scope of this investigation; nevertheless, it is possible to outline how such an investigation might be conducted in the light of our findings. The remainder of the conclusion will sketch in barest terms, therefore, how this dissertation might relate to backgrounds which have been suggested.

A. Philo

One of the points upon which our investigation has been forthright has been the impossibility of viewing the language and imagery of Hebrews in any kind of straightforwardly Platonic way. We noted emphatically in chapter 5 that events simply do not take place in a realm of eternal archetypes, precluding a

strictly Platonic reading of the tabernacle in Hebrews.[49] Our study has also noted significant differences between Philo and Hebrews at several points.

The question of Hebrews *vis á vis* Philo, however, is a slightly different issue, for Philo's Platonism has been combined with Stoic thought[50] in a way which creates the possibility for a somewhat ambiguous 'intermediate' level of reality. The use of χαρακτήρ in the wisdom 'hymn' of 1:3, for example, and the seemingly odd use of εἰκών in 10:1 could very well represent a Philonic type influence of some sort upon Christology in which Christ is an intermediate term between God and humanity. Similarly, the suggestions we have made in chapter 3 in relation to a supposed *logos* motif could also find its original background in this general context.

One of the most significant similarities between Hebrews and Philo is the rational flavour of the epistle which we have noted in chapter 4.[51] Hebrews tends to formulate sin, for example, in primarily rational terms. Since documents such as *4 Maccabees* also have such a dimension, this tendency might better be termed 'philosophical' or even 'Alexandrian' rather than 'Philonic'. It may be an important indicator, nonetheless, of the author's general background and/or his pre-conversion way of thinking. Much concerning all of these possibilities, however, is speculative and does not appreciably affect one's understanding of the epistle. The argument of Hebrews can be understood without any significant reference to Philo.

While there are many superficial similarities of Hebrews with Philo, the differences are very significant. The following three points are representative of those which our study has uncovered:

1. The heavenly sanctuary

The heavenly sanctuary of Hebrews is both a point of similarity and dissimilarity to Philo. On the one hand, the author's tendency to view the tabernacle cosmologically was seen to have ready precedents in both Philo and Josephus.[52] On the other hand, there is no indication in Hebrews that the author conceives of the pattern shown to Moses as any kind of Platonic archetype. In every case the author approaches such language but does not in the end reach a Platonic 'destination', using ὑπόδειγμα instead of μίμημα and utilising other

[49]See chapter 3, pp. 115f. and chapter 5, p. 165.

[50]So, for example, Isaacs, *Space* 195ff.

[51]See chapter 4, pp. 135-37.

[52]See chapter 5, p. 150.

language like σκιά and εἰκών in different senses. The Platonic/Philonic terms παράδειγμα and ἀρχέτυπος do not even appear. While it is possible that the author is suppressing his Platonic beliefs because of the sensitivities of his audience, such a possibility must be left to the realm of speculation.[53] It is nevertheless possible that he, like Philo, was able to combine the two understandings of the tabernacle with each other in some way in his thinking.

2. The destruction of the created realm

One of the ways in which Hebrews differs from Philo is in its conception of the future of the earthly realm. For Philo, while matter was created at some point in the past (e. g. *Opf.* 171), it will last forever; although its changing nature entails the eventual destruction of any specific part of creation when it will pass out of being (*Dec.* 58). In Plato and Philo's scheme, the created realm is inferior, but it is not evil in any way.[54] Perfection, as we will mention below, is the ascension of the mind to the perfect realm of divine forms while still in this world.[55]

On the other hand, while Hebrews also envisages a dichotomy between the earthly and heavenly realms, the particular nature of the earthly realm is more ambiguous. While it has been created by God and for God and seems to play a contant role within God's plan and purpose (2:10); it is nonetheless the realm where the Devil holds the power of death (2:14), and the author seems to associate a need for atonement from its very foundation (9:26). As we will suggest in the next few paragraphs, it is almost as if the merging of an Alexandrian viewpoint with the apocalyptic aspects of Christianity resulted in a kind of 'proto-Gnostic' mix which is not dissimilar to later Gnostic thought. Hebrews also utilises expressions at times which are reminiscent of a material/noumenal distinction (e.g. 12:18), although this reminiscence is more

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[53]I accept the possibility, perhaps even the probability that an Alexandrian background may be the best explanation for certain latent features of the author's thought, such as the fact that he considers the created realm to be innately inferior (a point emphasised to me by Dunn); nevertheless, even if this 'flavour' has been left by an Alexandrian heritage, the substance of Plato/Philonism has evaporated in the author's cooking.

[54]So L. K. K. Dey, , *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews*, SBLDS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975) 134: 'imperfection does not mean something bad or evil in this tradition.' J. Thompson, '"That Which Abides": Some Metaphysical Assumptions in the Epistle to the Hebrews', Vanderbilt University (1974), also notes the transition from Platonism, in which there is no denigration of the material world (158-59, e. g. *Timaeus*) to Gnosticism, which is 'world denying' (260) and sees the world as the place of evil and deception (159). Hebrews stands somewhere in the middle somewhere between these two extremes.

[55]Dey, while hitting far wide of the mark with regard to Hebrews, provides a good introduction to Philo's understanding of perfection.

true of the created realm than of the heavenly domain; that is to say, Hebrews does seem to refer to the earthly realm in material terms, while it does not so clearly conceive of the heavenly world noumenally, as we have already implied.

3. Perfection

A final point of comparison between Hebrews and Philo which can be made on the basis of our study concerns their respective conceptions of perfection. As we argued at some length in chapter 3,[56] perfection in Hebrews is defined formally, with the particular perfection of any given entity depending entirely upon the appropriate, complete status which that entity could have within God's purposes. This conclusion is, in our opinion, an important contribution of this study to Hebrews scholarship, since there has been much confusion on this point.

The perfection of Christ in Hebrews, therefore, is the qualification and attainment of his office and function as royal Son and high priest, because this was the appropriate destiny for the Christ in the *logos* of God. For believers, perfection involves a cleansing for sins and ultimate access to heaven, since this is the 'glory and honour' God had intended for them. Similarly, Christ has perfected 'our faith' because he has brought it to its consummation as destined from the foundation of the world. Perfection, therefore, has many specific faces in the epistle, although one general meaning.

Perfection in Philo, while in some ways analogous to Hebrews, is in other ways very divergent from the epistle. Since Philo's notion of God's '*logos*' for the world is completely different from Hebrews, a study such as L. K. K. Dey's *The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews* was ill-founded from the very beginning, committing the cardinal sin of comparing parallel texts before examining Hebrews itself.[57] In accordance with the fact that Philo does not believe in the eventual conflagration of the material realm, conjoined with Philo's Platonic/Stoic understanding of the human soul, perfection for him is the capacity to contemplate the eternal forms while existing in bodily form. Dey is thus forced to the conclusion that the 'revolutionary thesis' of Hebrews is that Christ 'accomplished perfection in this realm' of imperfection and thus 'opened the way for others to participate in perfection within this realm of creation and not outside of it.'[58] The foreignness of Dey's

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[56]See chapter 3, pp. 97-106.

[57]This study, therefore, is an embodiment of the worst methodological flaws of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule.

[58]*Intermediary World* 219.

conclusion to what is Hebrews' actual use of perfection language demonstrates its distance on this score from Philo.

B. Apocalyptic

Hebrews shares several characteristics in common with much apocalyptic literature. These range from features which are not exclusively (or intrinsically)[59] apocalyptic such as a two age orientation and eschatological outlook to a dichotomous view of realtity in which the invisible realm represents the truer realm. The presence of the Devil within the scheme of the author (2:14) indicates the element of at least one demonic power, as is the case with much apocalyptic literature. The cosmology of Hebrews does seem to presuppose a multilayered heaven as in many apocalypses (although this scheme does not play a role in his argument), and the possibility of divorcing the spirit from the body seems a comfortable parallel to this body of literature. Christ's passage through the heavens, while partly a function of the high priestly metaphor, is at least superficially analogous to the ascent of various figures in apocalyptic literature.

One place at which Hebrews noticeably does not utilise an apocalyptic theme is in its use of the heavenly tabernacle. We have noted in chapter 5 that while it is possible that the recipients of the epistle might have had viewed this structure as a free standing tabernacle as in Jewish apocalyptic,[60] the author himself does not seem to share this viewpoint, turning to the notion of a cosmological tabernacle when he is not developing his own metaphor. His repeated allusions to the throne of God, however, perhaps catch an even more significant aspect of 'apocalyptic thinking', one which will become of central importance in the literature of Merkabah mysticism.

The point at which Hebrews may experience the greatest impact of apocalyptic upon its thought is at the intersection of its dualism with the idea of the future world conflagration of the created realm. As we argued in chapter 4, Hebrews is distinctive from most of the background literature in that it does not envisage in any way the renewal of the created order.[61] Apart from perhaps 2 Enoch 65:6, an apocalyptic text (!), there are scarcely any other examples of such thinking outside of Gnostic texts. Does Hebrews mark in a special way a

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[59]See C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 23ff, and J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 2ff.

[60]See chapter 5, pp. 191-92.

[61]See chapter 4, pp. 126-27.

transition from a certain form of Platonism to Gnosticism *via* certain categories found in the apocalyptic literature of the time? Such a possibility merits further exploration.

C. Gnosticism

In general, we consider the studies of Otfried Hofius[62] and Lincoln Hurst[63] to have demonstrated correctly that studies such as that of Ernst Käsemann's *The Wandering People of God* have undoubtedly been anachronistic in their appropriation of Gnostic texts.[64] We have, however, surprisingly been led more and more to the conclusion that Hebrews shares significant features with this later literature, in such a way that one could suppose that the epistle either models those factors which also resulted in Gnostic thought or even that Hebrews might represent an early step toward this later movement.[65] Two key points will demonstrate our claim.

First of all, Hebrews shares with later Gnostic texts the notion that the created realm will eventually be destroyed.[66] While Hebrews does not seem to consider the created realm to be evil, it views the earthly realm as the place where evil holds power in such a way as almost to approach such a view. Hebrews thus seems to be somewhere on a spectrum between Platonism and Gnosticism, intrinsically associating the created realm with the power of evil but not drawing the conclusion that it is evil in and of itself. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the shocking quality of 9:26, which almost thoughtlessly associates sin with the creation. Such a view is strikingly reminiscent of later Gnostic thinking.

The second area in which Hebrews may point toward later Gnostic thought is in its association of heaven with spirits rather than bodies of any sort. Hebrews even seems to speak of Christ's offering as the presentation of an 'eternal spirit' rather than of a resurrected body (9:14). Such thinking is well on its way toward that Gnosticism which will view Christ's ascension to heaven as a

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[62]*Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, WUNT 11 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1970).

[63]*Background* 67-75.

[64]*The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, 2nd ed., trans. by R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 [1957]).

[65]An insight long since recognised by E. Grässer, now in his commentary, *An die Hebräer (Hebr 1-6)*, EKK 17/1 (Zürich: Neukirchener, 1990) 34.

[66]Cf. M. Peel, 'Gnostic Eschatology and the New Testament', *NovT* 12 (1970) 158, who notes *Adv. H.* 1.23, 2; 1.7.

redemption from the physical realm and procession to the spiritual world. As we have briefly suggested above, a future study might examine in more detail a trajectory which explored how an Alexandrian dualism might have combined with certain Christian apocalyptic motifs to form the kind of 'proto-Gnosticism' which seems to occur in Hebrews.

IV. *Conclusion*

This concluding chapter of our study has served a dual function. On the one hand, it has attempted to bring together relevant aspects of the preceding chapters in a suggestive, rather than conclusive way. As we claimed at the beginning of this conclusion, the previous six chapters constitute a complete study in their own right independent of the background question. Those earlier chapters attempted as much as was possible to reconstruct the thought world of Hebrews on its own terms in order to make an examination of parallels with background literature as unbiased as possible. That investigation resulted in several innovative features in and of itself, such as our definition of perfection and our delineation of the metaphorical nature of the high priestly motif.

We did not feel, however, that it would have been appropriate to close this dissertation without first noting how the preceding study might impact that which gave impetus to the investigation in the first place, namely, the background question. As such, this concluding chapter has suggested ways in which our previous work might be applied in moving toward an answer. We have suggested that the author is first and most of all, a member of the early church, following in the train of the Pauline corpus and the primitive tradition. We suggested that the author was probably a Hellenist with certain characteristics in common with the Stephen tradition and that his audience was probably a group at least sympathetic with those early Christians whose break with Jewish traditions was much less dramatic.

Finally, we made some very brief comparisons of Hebrews with the various literature which has been utilised in the long discussion of the background issue, namely Philo, apocalyptic, and Gnosticism. Here we presented a thesis which might be taken up in a further study, namely, that Hebrews stands at an intersection between Alexandrian and apocalyptic thinking in such a way as to represent in minature the kind of 'mixture' of factors that may have similarly brought about second century Gnosticism.

On the basis of numerous points at which this study has raised new possibilities or re-presented old theories in new clothing, it would seem that our initial method has resulted in some profitable results. Self-examination also demonstrates all too clearly, however, the points at which we have found it

difficult to abstain from speculation. In the end, it is hoped that some of our suggestions will lead to new ways of looking at old questions in Hebrews research. In particular, if our understanding of the general rhetorical situation of Hebrews has been accurate, then several of the epistle's riddles have come into much better focus. On the other hand, if the thought world of Hebrews is as we have suggested, then we have gained new knowledge of a certain part of early Christianity which may also help to illuminate at points the nature of the early church in general, as well as of other parts of the New Testament.

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